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RUTH ST. DENIS  
AN  
UNFINISHED LIFE

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**RUTH ST. DENIS. TAKEN IN 1937**  
*Photo by Blechman*





RUTH ST. DENIS  
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UNFINISHED LIFE

*An Autobiography*

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**Author's Note:** THE first planning of this book was begun at Denishawn House under the stimulus of one friend, and later, in London, another took up the task. Its first pages were read by two beloved persons there who gave me encouragement to go on. Then followed a period of doubt, a sense of futility and distrust, and it was laid aside.

At last an extraordinary being came into my life and to this book. It seemed that she had been waiting from the beginning, unknown to me, to take into her hands these words of mine; to shape them into a tale that others might understand.

I gave her pages, journals, fragments, of that world which had been my past. She took these writings and wove them into a story to be read by those who love the dance, and by those who are intrigued by the journey of a questing soul.

But more than all her editorial labors was her unending luminous faith which found it all worth doing, and her gift of a wide, deep, spiritual frame in which I could move with fearless intensity.

Life being what it is, neither of us has any illusion that we have told a perfect life in a perfect way, but truth is here and deep praise for all that has been so far lived and for all that is to come.

To Henrietta Buckmaster goes my special praise for having released into this form the story of my life . . . so far.





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**CHAPTER I: Childhood and the Farm:** IN THOSE enchanting days of my childhood I remember best the swing under the old red barn. This barn was on a slight incline looking over the valley below, and it had a carriage-opening facing south in which Father had hung the swing. It had long yellow ropes and a square wooden seat. I would begin a kind of ritual of dreams by running a few steps half seated and half standing, in the immemorial way of children starting to swing. As I swung higher and higher, the back end of the swing almost touched the beams of the carriage shelter and then I would swing out over the valley and the world.

Always, at the first thrilling lift of the swing over the valley, with the whole world lying beneath me, I used to feel again and again that I was a bird or a cloud or the wind, and forget that I was merely a long-limbed, freckle-faced child absorbing her first sense of power and exaltation and joy. Of course I came back to earth with each return of the swing. It was the Law, and this I was to learn in after years with painful exactness. But now I knew nothing but the sheer happiness of motion and dreams. And when Mother's voice would call high and clear I would cease that slight exertion of my will which kept the swing in motion, and very gradually let "die," but this never-failing experience of ecstatic freedom and domination over time and the world below would merely fold up in some recess of my spirit.

When as a child running over the fields of our farm I felt the joy of life pulsing through me, when I felt the warm earth under my feet and the great golden sun bathing my body, then I knew life as a magical reality; and to this day I cannot admit to myself that the strain and suffering, the so-called disillusionment of life, are anything but a horrid dream from which I shall awake—not into some fantastic heaven of man's conceiving, but on this same earth, under the same blessed sun and the same ineffable moon.

While this long-legged eager young creature was dashing about the farm which we called Pin Oaks, one moment running Tige, the bulldog, over the fields and another lying on her stomach on the lawn read-



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ing a book, or hanging out of the little bedroom window dreaming under the moon, all the wellsprings of vitality and creativeness were finding their way to the air and the sunlight.

Of mortal history, my own blessed mother and father were a remarkable pair of human beings.

I feel that my urge for pushing forward into new fields of vision and scaling far mountains of thought was derived largely from these two who were so near the pioneer stages of our American life. Father, not long from the Civil War, married Mother fresh from having graduated from the University of Michigan as a doctor, a profession very little invaded by women. As the poet Tagore would say, their dreams of beauty—Father's flying machines and Mother's proposed lecture tours on health and beauty—came to grief at the feet of my tiny body.

My mother was a woman about fifty years ahead of her time. She sensed life in an infinitely more intense way than any of the people in our neighborhood. She was the youngest of thirteen children. My grandmother must have been a wonderful little person. Her husband left her and disappeared, never to return, after having bequeathed to her the thirteen children. She took up the challenge of life and reared her little brood in a town called Canandaigua, New York. I do not think all of the thirteen lived. Those that grew to maturity were intelligent, fine, Christian people. In my girlhood Mother took me several times to New Haven to meet my lovable aunts and uncles, but I dimly realized then what a different species Mother was from the rest of the family. She was the least egotistical person one can imagine, but she used to say long afterwards with tears in her beautiful gray eyes that she had disappointed and neglected her mother who looked to her more than to all the others for some stimulus and companionship in her later years.

Oh, the long, long regrets of children who know they have been unloving and ungrateful. Humanly speaking, I was a good daughter, I gave her every comfort and stayed with her as long as I could. She never complained but she knew, and so did I, that much more might have been done to bring her my companionship when she needed it most.

After Mother's graduation as a doctor, she practiced more than a year in Philadelphia in a clinic, and then suffered a breakdown from overwork. She went to Dr. Jackson's water cure. The doctor was apparently a forerunner of the Battle Creek idea, and Mother stayed with him about a year and swore by him for the rest of her life. At the end of this period, when she was about thirty, she met Father at Perth

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Amboy, New Jersey, and their romantic courtship began. At this time Father was separated from his first wife, but as soon as he could win his divorce, they were married.

Perth Amboy was an art colony which I know little about, save that Steele MacKaye, the father of the poet, Percy MacKaye, was one of its prime movers. He was a genius of our early American theater, and life around him must have been an exciting and creative affair. A rich benefactor had provided the funds for this experiment in living and in art, and many of the intelligentsia of that period flocked to the colony. Writers, actors, and painters composed its personnel. How Mother, who was a doctor, and Father, who was an electrical engineer and inventor, drifted into this art colony I cannot say, but in after years I saw the little stone cottage where they lived and loved. They both used to look back at those days in the colony with a kind of wistful tenderness. They were romantic people and for a time at least lived out their need for love and beauty.

Father was an Englishman by birth, but a staunch American by conviction. He was born in England in the tiny hamlet of Stourbridge which we visited once together during my first appearance in London. His parents migrated to America when he was six years old. They soon settled in Boonton, New Jersey, but it was in Newark that I was born, and in Newark are living today great uncles and aunts of mine whom I have met hurriedly on tour.

Mother still looms over my spiritual head as so truly great a person that I cannot even attempt to do her justice. Mother's faith in the unseen was the steel structure that held our family together. In after life this faith proved to be the one power that allowed me to give such talent as I have to an appreciative world. She was stalwartly independent not only in thought but in dress as well. In the midst of fashions which dictated corsets, bustles, four starched petticoats and hair rats, my strong-minded mother would have none of them. I imagine the townfolk of Somerville regarded her with a good deal of curiosity as she did her shopping, clad in a very plain homemade dress with her beautiful black hair in a simple knot at the back of her head and no corset to mar the long slender lines of her body. She did not have Father's geniality and warmth of temperament. All the dogs and children loved Father, while Mother appealed only to those intellectuals who on rare occasions visited the farm and discussed the finer points of theology with her—but those who knew and loved her called her a great woman. Religion and health were Mother's constant concern, while poetry, inventions, and intellectual freedom were Father's.

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Poor Father's spiritual path was hard. His Ingersolls and Tom Paines proved, in hours of great need, to be but slender props. I remember making an epigram of which I was very proud: "A man who does not believe in God generally leans on somebody who does." Father's temporary escape and support was Irish whisky. A vision of him coming home from town riding behind Old Dan, our farm horse, the reins slack over the dashboard, Dan plodding homeward undirected, comes to me often in tenderness.

Other memories of this lovable, brilliant father of mine are of a radiant soul, full of talents and loving impulses, always scanning the future for some opportunity for his inventions, dreaming of flying machines while the world was still crawling.

A more loving father cannot be imagined. He walked the floor with me many a night when I was ill to save Mother, who was never very strong. He taught me the ways and work of the farm with such kind patience that all his weaknesses fall away in my warm and unutterably dear remembrance of him. I see his blessed face and outstretched arms into which I would leap whenever he called me by whistling twice. *Two* was for me, but one was for my little brother.

My beloved companion, my adored Buzz, was born when I was eight years old. My mother said he was the best baby that ever was, so different from me. He early regarded life with a philosophic serenity, which, during the hectic seasons of my career, proved a most necessary balance wheel to my erratic ways. With a delicious sense of humor and a grave face when telling the funniest story, he was more the Englishman than all the rest of us.

The old house stood on the side of a hill. There were lovely woods behind it, going up to the summit, and open fields and the valley below. One stepped off the road on to the parlor floor, while the kitchen was below. A wide veranda ran the full length of the house, and there the summer boarders, who were a necessary addition to our lives, loved to sit and rock. I believe the house was built by some rich gentry of the past. It was quite the manor house of the neighborhood. Tall pines near the house reared their pointed tops against the sky. A little path up through the woods led to the hilltop, where at night on an open plateau the moon seemed to shine in special glory. Here Tige and I could linger under a favorite gnarled oak and listen for the delicious sounds of the woods.

Later we walked along the ridge of this hill past the Logans' place. The Logans were an Irish family to whom I was devoted. Their elder

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daughter, Lizzie, of the gay spirits and sharp wit, was my dear companion. What Lizzie and I could not think up to do on a long Sunday afternoon was not worth doing. But when on these evening strolls it was too late to call Lizzie, who had been up since five with the work of the farm and was now asleep in her little attic room, Tige and I would creep by the silent farm buildings and continue on the mountain road. When it grew late and I had mooned long enough I would begin to think about Mother and her usual admonitions "not to stay up too late."

I wonder if the spell of the moon is not always the same. At first thought it seems a different thing when we are in our childhood, but I believe it always calls for the same quality of response. To the spiritually awakened, the moon is the symbol of death, the strong pull and drag of the tides, the surrender to the earth as it turns away from the sun into the darkness of its own dreams. How subtle is the potion of the moon, how strong must be the inner strength of the soul to resist it!

And the sun—what a marvelous deity to worship! I can see myself standing at the end of a pasture that had an old broken rail fence. Maple trees ran along this boundary between our field and our neighbor's. Sometimes those trees were full and green with early summer leaves. Sometimes they were bare, with their lovely branches making fascinating designs against the pale coldness of the winter sky. But spring or winter, whenever the sun went down I made a funny little bow, almost dropping to my knees. No one ever taught me to do this. I simply obeyed an impulse to honor the sun, which had made a long journey and was now going to bed.

I loved all natural things. There was a spring on the farm, a pure cold stream that ran by the house and which never, to Father's infinite satisfaction, went dry. A quaint old basin made of stone, which had been there always, long before we took the farm, was half sunk in a little garden opposite the house. Sometimes on hot days in August farmers on their way up the long hill would stop and ask to drink or to let their horses, loosed from their check reins, plunge their noses into its cool depths.

Once Mother took me to the ocean at Asbury Park and when I first saw the sea sparkling under a hot summer's sun, and heard the pound and roar of the waves, I stood transfixed. Mother said afterwards that I stood so still she thought I was afraid of the sea, but it was not fear. It was such a vast ecstasy that I could not take it in.

I was a very young child when I first felt the subtle and indescribable attraction of religion. Mother used to read aloud from the Bible and

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my love for her made me listen intently. The Bible very soon became identified in my mind as Mother's panacea for storm and stress. Often late at night I would sit with her in the kitchen after Father and little Buzz had gone to bed, in order to help her in my inarticulate childish way dissolve some dissonance she had had with Father or wrestle with the everlasting problem of poverty. She would open the Bible, either at Psalms or St. John, and read aloud words which I could only partly grasp. Sometimes, if her poor head was aching terribly, she would ask me to take the book, and I would stumble through a comforting verse, and then close my eyes and fold my hands as she said aloud either the Lord's Prayer or one of her own inspiration.

My imagination and my spirit were warmed by these tendrils of religious thought that were wrapping themselves about me. When I had climbed through the woods to the little plateau on the hills, I could see a mountain which we called Mount Hermon. I had been told there was a Mount Hermon in the Holy Land, and as I stood on the plateau in the sunlight or the moonlight I always felt a strange joy of association between far-off Palestine and our own mountain that was called Hermon, and I thought with a kind of trembling of the awful doings of the Prophets on the one in Palestine.

When I was about eleven I read the New Testament to myself for the first time. Heretofore all my knowledge of it had come from Mother's readings and, knowing my emotional sensitivity, she had wisely never read aloud the whole tragedy of the cross. Now it struck my childish heart with a tremendous impact and for days I could think of nothing else. Visions of those older times began to crowd my mind. I felt the sunshine and saw the hills and streets of Jerusalem, and slowly a subtle identification with those remote times and events grew upon me. It became necessary to relate myself with them in a way I could see and feel.

I took two long bath towels from the linen closet upstairs, and hid them in my room. Then I went out to the barn and began to shape two wooden boards to fit my feet and contrived straps of tape and cord to hold them on. I took these belongings up to the old north bedroom where I would not be disturbed. I, who was generally so open in all my doings, felt an irresistible need to be as secretive as possible. Intuitively I knew that this outward expression of a sudden and mystical identification with the Christ would only look ridiculous to a loving family.

I stood in the middle of the room; and although to all appearances I must have seemed merely a child "dressing up," I was in my own

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mind performing something very close to a sacred ritual as I hung the bath towels around my body, fastening them at my shoulders and waist by cords, and put the wooden sandals on my feet. Then I stood in a kind of daze, staring at myself for a long time in the mirror which I had taken off the wall and stood upon a chair. For that moment I really believed myself the little Jesus, and a curious flame burned in me that, in the light of later wisdom, can only be interpreted as a faint but intense identification with a cosmic consciousness.

When the mood passed, and I took off my robe and sandals, and went downstairs again to take up the routine of normal living, I had touched a divine spark that was later to burn in me with increasing intensity.

This genuine, unaffected awareness of spiritual things was soon bruised, however, against the outward forms of worship. Occasionally I went with Mother to her Methodist church. But it all seemed to my bewildered and beauty-loving eyes dull and heavy. The congregation, upon entering the church, suddenly dropped all charm and gaiety and beauty and put on a hushed and solemn demeanor, and by the time the service began a terrible weight lay upon my spirit. The hymns were sung in slow, lugubrious fashion, the minister spoke solemnly and at interminable length, and a terrible feeling like death seemed to hang between the spaces of the pews and settle on the faces of the people.

I wanted to escape to the farm and the path through the woods and the view of the mountains. I felt a closer spiritual relationship to these natural things than to the cold barrenness of the little church. The sun and the moon were nearer the little boy Jesus than the lifeless service on Sunday. And my soul naturally sought its own environment.

An ancient tradition has it that when I was three years old Father, who played the violin and belonged to a little country dance orchestra, took me to a barn dance. As soon as I heard the music—so runs the hoary legend—I began to jounce up and down, and Father, seizing a tambourine from the trap drummer, thrust it into my hands. I started beating out the time, with some uncertain footwork to accompany it, a line of conduct I have followed ever since.

The summer boarders, who were a desperate necessity to the budget, used to call me "Delsarte," because of the lessons that Mother gave me from time to time. In New Haven, not long before, she had met a Madame Poté, who was a seventh attenuation of a pupil of François Delsarte. Her technique was dubious but her enthusiasm contagious.

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Mother could not do the exercises herself, but she instantly saw their value for me in correcting some of the deficiencies of my fast-growing body. I vaguely remember a little book with some sketches in it of extremely chaste ladies and gentlemen standing straight and nude in poses of Delsarte relaxation and posture. I used to stand at the foot of my brass bedstead in the old east bedroom with Mother sitting in her gingham apron holding this book and directing my movements. I grasped the rail of the bed, swinging my long legs to and fro, doing the numberless exercises that were the actual beginning of all my dancing. To commemorate my energy, one of the boarders gave me an old-fashioned blue plush album, and on its colored pages had written, "To Delsarte. In years to come when this you see, I wonder what your name will be."

They might have added with even better grace, "In years to come when this you see, I wonder what we all will see," for certainly at this time I was a most unpromising child. I was tall and thin and had close-cropped brown hair and a small face full of freckles. I never seemed to know what to do with my long arms and legs. Whenever Mother and I were invited out to supper I would sit on the edge of a chair and try to compose my hands, but people would fall over my long legs before I could dispose of them. I would blush and Mother under her breath would beg me to pull in my legs. An exceedingly boyish person, I detested the girls' clothes of that period. We were so poor that Mother could scarcely ever buy us anything fresh or attractive. Our relatives in New Haven were kind but inartistic folk. They sent sensible, dull woolen dresses, awful hats and peppermint stockings, which I despised.

In my very early years I was so puny that it was doubtful whether I would live. The free life of the farm and Mother's hygienic ideas finally won out, and I began to shoot up. At ten and eleven I was nearly as tall as I am now, but my height for a while was obtained at the expense of my strength. As a result, my movements were supple but ungainly.

Even in those days, however, I found great joy in movement. When Lizzie and I and one or two of the neighbors' children would congregate to act out some kind of play, I chose to do all the killing. I never was happy unless there was a tussle between me and some antagonist. My opponent was invariably vanquished, but since I enjoyed the sensation of falling I either stabbed myself or fainted after my great scene was over. Then for sheer sensuous delight I would scramble up and

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collapse all over again. I can still feel the soft lawn under me as I lay sprawled and relaxed.

Before I was ten I had the tremendous emotional experience of seeing a Barnum and Bailey circus somewhere in the upper reaches of Manhattan. A dear man, Mr. John W. Lovell, one of the successful early publishers in the United States, was in the habit of coming to the farm to see some children, Paul and Pearl Plunkett, who were boarding with us. He always brought us gifts, and on one incredible occasion took us on the long journey from Somerville to New York and exhibited to us all the marvels of the circus side show, of girls hanging suspended in the air, of elephants and human skeletons. This was all very exciting to a country child, but was nothing in comparison to the colossal spectacle of *The Burning of Rome*, which made up the second part of the program. Then and there, at its fire, was my passion for spectacles lighted, and the spiritual descendants of *The Burning of Rome* pervaded my whole career.

Nothing had ever been seen before like these houses going up in flames, with the Colosseum a black silhouette at one side. As a grand finale a ballet of a hundred angels floated about on the stage, dressed in costumes made of ribbons. I could scarcely contain my excitement. All the way home I sat in a corner of the carriage, my face tense and pale, and would not speak to anyone. The first thing I did when I got to the farm was to go into the garret and slash up a pair of Mother's old curtains to create my first dancing costume.

When I was about ten years of age I was taken to my first dancing class, which was conducted by Maude Davenport in Somerville. Many years later I met Maude and her husband on one of my tours in the Middle West, and we laughed about the day I appeared in her exclusive dancing school. I was tall and ungainly and in the habit of running around the farm in a pair of faded blue overalls and no shoes. For this occasion I wore my dun-colored dress and the hated striped stockings, but by no stretch of the imagination did I look like the other children. In those days, proper young misses wore patent-leather pumps. (This, you remember, was before Isadora Duncan took the shoes and stockings off a world of children.) Their blond little heads were frizzed and tied with enormous bows, their still beruffled dresses were directly related to their ceremonious bowings as they met their partners on the dancing floor. Little boys were very shining as to face, with smoldering resentment in their eyes. They, too, wore decorous colors and tight slippers, and their chief occupation during this hour



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was to grasp their little partners with a clammy hand and lead them to some other place on the huge, slippery floor.

Mothers, dressed in their best bonnets and rustling silks, sat around the room watching their darlings improve their manners. Into this impeccable atmosphere came my tall New England mother, leading by the hand her eager but embarrassed child. I am sure Maude was more than equal to every occasion and tried to put Mother at her ease; but I am equally sure that there was much whispering among the other mothers, and downright titters from the class itself as they caught sight of those awful stockings. What we did and just how long I remained in Maude's school I don't remember, but she spoke one day to Mother about taking me to New York to visit her great dancing master, the famous Karl Marwig. Whether Maude did this to remove me deftly from her own dancing class or whether she saw real talent in my lumbering attempts to dance the *schottische* with her mincing little pupils remains unknown to me.

She wrote to Marwig and he replied that he would see me dance. This of course sent me and the family into a most agitated state. Here was a great opportunity; but it would cost the better part of five dollars to take Mother and me to the city and back, and we simply did not have the money. I thought about it for a little while, and then I went into action. In the brook that ran by the house was a bed of delicious water cress. This I cut, put into little peach baskets, and peddled at a nickel apiece from door to door in Somerville. In this way I earned my first five dollars and got to see the great Karl Marwig.

I remember him standing at the end of a sort of *salon de danse* with polished floors and mirrors lining the walls and chandeliers overhead. He was a fashionable teacher, and taught willowy debutantes how to conduct themselves on ballroom floors.

I believe he was Swiss. In any case he resembled something romantically passé in black satin knee breeches, with a little mustache and goatee. He had a great charm of manner, which he expended even on me, a little country girl, dressed in homemade black lace with many flounces, my brown curls loosely hanging about a small eager face. I did a little Spanish dance with a tambourine. All I remember about it was placing the tambourine on the floor and pirouetting in it on my right foot while I took what I considered to be a splendid arabesque and slowly inched myself around until I had completed a circle. I also waved my arms about in the air with a lovely sense of choreographic adventure. Marwig interrupted the dance only long enough to murmur something to the effect that waving arms were not Spanish.

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It seems a little difficult to know what he saw in my dance, but when I finished he smiled at Mother and said that he felt I had talent. If I could manage to come to town twice a week he would be willing to give me lessons free.

Alas, alas, I was all too soon dipping my little curtsies to him and bowing my way out of the salon, for how in the world could Mother and I raise three dollars twice a week? Of course we were disappointed, but the disappointment was greatly ameliorated by Marwig's encouragement. If he thought I was good enough to give free lessons to . . . I think Mother began to realize with a delighted and yet apprehensive certainty that her little Delsarte was going to be a dancer.

Maude was delighted at Marwig's praise. She continued to give me lessons and I continued to practice with Mother; and certain plans began, I suspect, to formulate in all our minds.

Meanwhile, of course, the matter of education had been going on. A little red schoolhouse about a mile down the road had, for a short time, the honor of curbing what we dancers call my "space-covering" activities. Of course I hated the tedious, miserable hours at school, with my long legs under the desk, aching to be moved. I could not focus my mind on the geographical problems of Missouri, nor the exports of the state of New Jersey, when there were things of so much greater importance to be dreamed of.

The morning session was passed waiting for lunch, which I carried in my little tin lunch box and in the spring was eaten under the trees. During recess I played baseball with the boys, and sometimes the pursuit of butterflies or a little garter snake wiggling through a fence would make us late for the afternoon session.

But, all in all, school was merely a faint hope cherished by Mother. Perhaps, she had thought, a little formal education might seep through in spite of my resistance. I was perfectly content to get my book learning from the small but choice library on the farm. Here were books on invention, and Father's "livery-stable philosophers," Tom Paine, Robert Ingersoll, and the other "anti-Christians," as well as Mother's Emerson, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, by Brother Lawrence, the thirteenth-century monk, and some hundred or more volumes on medical or religious subjects. Now and then a novel crept in and I devoured it with all my romantic ardor. One book that seized upon my imagination and had a tremendous influence on my whole inner life was an exquisitely written allegory by Mabel Collins called *The Idyll of the White Lotus*. It was the story of a young boy brought by his mother to enter one of the great temples of ancient Egypt to become a priest.

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He was by nature a great mystic and he fell into the hands of the ecclesiastical machinery of the temple. His symbolic vision of illumination was the Lady of the White Lotus. When I was about twelve I found Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and began a manful exploration of it. Of course I did not understand it, but I stuck to it, page by page, and thus began a lifelong absorption in metaphysical literature.

But matters of far more importance to me than education were to take place in the schoolhouse. A new flag was needed, and to help procure this flag Mother began dallying with the idea of a Pin Oaks Dramatic Company which would produce a version of Denman Thompson's *The Old Homestead* in order to raise the funds. Naturally the idea was very exciting, but it was in a somewhat nebulous state when Mother received a letter from Aunt Mary, the wife of Uncle Northam Wright, of New Haven, Connecticut. Apparently Mother had mentioned my dancing lessons and her innocent concern with a theatrical company. And this merely confirmed their suspicions that Father was Bohemian and antireligious, and Mother intellectual and unstable. In the remoteness of New Haven it was difficult to get away from the picture of her as the wife of an impecunious inventor and the mother of a long-legged child who was allowed to run about the farm with apparently no known or decent goal in sight. Out of the goodness of their hearts they decided to give me some respectability. I was to go to Dwight L. Moody's Seminary at Northfield, Massachusetts.

Poor Mother was often bewildered by this growing, talented child; and I suppose that when a chance for a bit of real education, to say nothing of discipline, came my way she could do nothing but agree. I was excited, for everything new meant adventure. The Pin Oaks Dramatic Company was still too nebulous to counterbalance the prospect of a journey and a boarding school. My few clothes were packed, and off I started, blissfully unaware of how brief my time would be with Mr. Moody.

I lived in Reed Cottage along with some ten or fifteen other girls. To my young, wild, unruly will the hours of study and routine and the atmosphere of Northfield seemed limited and stuffy beyond words. The only thing I remember with joy was the music teacher, who allowed me to sing in his chorus. I became very restless and fretful, and my peace of mind was in no way restored by letters from Mother which described the progress of the Pin Oaks Dramatic Company. The production of *The Old Homestead* was planned for the holidays, when I would be home to assume a role and also contribute a little Delsarte.

Being an extremely honest child it began to dawn upon me that

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these theatrical activities of Mother and my possible participation in them during the holidays were not in harmony with either my uncle's reasons for sending me to Northfield or the religious atmosphere of the Seminary itself. I decided to see Mr. Moody and explain to him what I intended to do while I was home for the holidays. With all the poise of my thirteen years I made an appointment and went that afternoon to his lovely house overlooking the Connecticut River.

Mr. Moody, whom I irreverently called "the vinegar cruet" ■ my schoolmates, sat behind a broad desk while I perched on a small chair in a great state of nervous tension. I told my story very simply: I loved to dance, Mother liked to arrange dramatic productions, and so we were going to put on a play in our schoolhouse. Being whole-souled and generous in my confidences, and warming to my subject, I confided that Mother had not yet made up her mind whether she would eventually let me go on the stage, although all the boarders agreed I had talent, and I really did want very much to be an actress.

At this point his manner changed. He stiffened perceptibly and after a few moments of painful silence began to talk. He said everything about the stage that his revivalist mind could think of. To him and his kind the stage was like a country set apart, a place of utter condemnation to which no missionaries were sent. I listened at first meekly to his tirade, but finally interposed to say that Mother understood the things that he objected to but had prayed earnestly that she and I be guided in this matter. Apparently this was too much for him. He announced explosively that Mother knew nothing about God or prayer or morality, and that ■ I seriously thought of going on the stage he would rather see me throw myself in the Connecticut River here and now.

I think I could have borne the reference to the Connecticut River, but when he attacked my mother my young temper boiled over. I rose and towered over his desk with a few well-chosen remarks about misunderstandings, lack of tolerance, and charity—yes, I used these words even then—and came to a spirited conclusion by calling him a narrow-minded old bigot. I then picked up my little satchel, banged the door behind me, and ran out of the house.

At four o'clock that morning, aided by two confidantes and a liveryman, I caught the early-morning train. It was bitterly cold but all I was concerned with was leaving this hateful place forever.

Mother received me with her usual calm and asked very few questions. I was wisely set to work on *The Old Homestead* as soon as pos-

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sible. What the detonations from New Haven were I do not know, but a silence lay between the two families for some years.

I wish I could have seen the red schoolhouse performance when it eventually reached the boards. I was announced to do "Lessons from Delsarte." You will observe that this announcement was not stretched to include *dancing*. I think Mother's Methodist mind was still a little doubtful as to the complete morality of a dancing career. All I did this momentous evening was slowly move my arms up and down, swing my legs, and roll my head in an alarming circle, while Mother thumped out chords and arpeggios on the school piano. It was the first time that anyone in this section of New Jersey had seen such a sight. Children tittered, Mothers craned their necks, and fathers noisily indicated that they had come to see *The Old Homestead*. A long-legged, loosely contrived child in a cheesecloth dress could hardly have been a stimulating sight. But we made twenty-five dollars for the flag.

Our red schoolhouse success brought us dreams of a larger audience and in a few weeks we made our real public debut at Somerset Hall in Somerville. By now we had perfected *The Old Homestead* somewhat, and I think I had added a solo dance which is referred to in my first newspaper critique. Mother wrote a topical song, concerned with Somerville's luminaries, such as Senator Alvah Clark and Gaston the lawyer, and Father sang it in his light tenor voice. The whole evening was, if I may modestly say so, a huge success as will be seen by this spirited review which appeared in the *Unionist-Gazette* of December 28, 1893.

*The Old Homestead* was produced by the Pin Oaks Dramatic Company at Somerset Hall to a large audience last evening. The cast was entirely of local talent. T. L. Dennis took the well known part of "Uncle Josh" and Mrs. Dennis that of "Aunt Jerusha." Ruthie Dennis was the star of the performance in her skirt dances. Mr. Dennis made quite a hit with his topical song. The clog dancing and other features made up an interesting performance. Others in the cast of characters were Lizzie Logan, Ike Van Nostrand, Mr. Trainer, Miss Leree, Clark Miller, I. Watts, Mrs. Pratt, Fannie Pratt, T. Austin, J. Burns, J. Barton.

Between our very early farm days and this, a Mrs. Nancy M. Miller had come into our lives. She had taken a mortgage on the farm and had given us money to build an extra story to the house, so that we would have more room for summer boarders. She seems to have been a frequent instrument in my artistic growth.

She and her brother, Mr. Haynes, managed a delightful little hotel on West Twenty-sixth Street in New York, to which came the many

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writers and artists of that time. The dining room of the hotel was always the center of intellectual conversations. George Francis Train, a picturesque and familiar figure in New York in those days, was one of those who frequented this little hostelry. Mrs. Miller made us her guests on our infrequent visits to the city.

The first man who loomed up in my life as an emotionally significant figure and one who had for more than twenty years a tremendous influence on all my activities was Myron Pritchard, whom I met on one of these visits. On the occasion of our first meeting Mother and Mrs. Miller were busy with affairs of their own and I was restlessly moving up and down, bored with my surroundings. At this point a tall, attractive New Englander came into the room and Mrs. Miller turned to him and said, "Myron, as a favor to me do something with this child for the evening," and I looked up into those grave yet humorous eyes, sharpened with glasses, saw his quiet yet faintly whimsical mouth, and heard the voice that was to mean so much to me during all the years of my artistic beginnings.

There instantly passed between Myron and me, young as I was, those delicate signals of attraction which reveal the beginnings of what may or may not develop into a love relationship. With him it ever hung on the borderland of friendship. He told me years later that he had vague ideas when we met of first educating me—there was plenty of room for that—and then marrying me. As it was, this evening he sensed in the wild-eyed child an eager spirit which would undoubtedly be thrilled to see such a spectacle as the Palisades Amusement Park offered, but even he had no idea of the influence this spectacle would have on my later life. He said afterwards he did not watch the performance, but kept his eyes on my face as I drank in the magic of the pageant ballet, *Egypt through the Centuries*. It was produced by Imra Kalafry who I learned subsequently was a well-known ballet master. Of course it was a toe ballet and, viewed from the vantage point of today, the choreography and the costumes were totally unsuited to the theme of various episodes in the life of Egypt, but to me it contained such magic that for months afterwards I dreamed of it.

My intense responsiveness to beauty grew in solitude. To all appearances I was merely an irresponsible, mischievous child, but my senses were gradually attuning themselves to impressions. I shall never forget a period about twilight when the sky was deep turquoise with black clouds hovering near the horizon. Always at this hour a train passed on its way to New York, and it would sound its whistle in the valley—a long-drawn, melancholy sound that seemed so poignant and tragic

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in its vibrations that it roused the latent sadness that has lingered with me all my life. I loved the whistle, and I dreaded it.

I am sure that during this period I did not think consciously of myself as a dancer. Most children have a joyous, instinctive response to rhythm. Even as a child I loved to fling my body on the green lawn at twilight and feel the hard, cool earth, or dash out almost naked into a sudden summer shower. Not until I saw my first vision of the creative dance in the person of Genevieve Stebbens did I begin to have any idealism in relation to the dance. Mother and I were given tickets for one of her recitals, and this occasion saw the real birth of my art life. The image of her white, Grecian figure became so indelibly printed on my mind that everything I subsequently did stemmed from this revelation.

Antedating Isadora Duncan by many years, Genevieve Stebbens must have had the same feeling for the dance that Isadora had. The difference lay, however, in the fact that Mrs. Stebbens' art was a beauty built by an intellect keenly aware of the Greek values of movement and the dynamics of rhythm, whereas Isadora was largely the intuitive instrument of forces beyond her control, which pulsed through her and swept her into divine and flawless expressions.

To me at this early age nothing so beautiful had ever entered my life. The curtain rose on a dark greenish background (this was, of course, long before Isadora's famous blue curtains) and there stood an exquisite woman in a costume made of soft ivory-white material that fell in gracious lines to her feet, her figure beautifully proportioned, her blond head proud and shapely. The strong light pouring upon her made her gleam like a pearl against the dark setting.

She moved in a series of plastiques which were based upon her understanding of the laws of motion discovered by Delsarte. Her poses were derived from Greek statuary and encompassed everything from the tragedy of Niobe to the joyousness of Terpsichore. Later she did a dance called *The Dance of Day*. At the opening of the scene she was lying on the floor asleep, and then, awakened by the morning sun, she rose with a lovely childlike movement to her knees and bathed herself in its rays. A light rhythmic step signified the morning and the noontide; and then began the slower movements of the afternoon, presently mingled with sadness as the late rays brought her slowly to her knees and again into her reclining posture of sleep. It was most effective and lovely, and represented an imagination reaching out for a vision of the dance as yet undreamed of in her generation.

Through Mrs. Stebbens I glimpsed for the first time the individual

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possibilities of expression and the dignity and truth of the human body, moving in that Grecian atmosphere of grace and light.

When high-school age came along, I set off very sadly in the crisp mornings for Somerville, four miles away. To leave the farm, even for a time, was to be cut adrift from the elements that meant all of beauty and life to me. I hated the ugly school buildings but I matched them well, for my clothes were still the creations of my relatives. I had always hated them, but now I became self-conscious when I saw the better dressed children of the town.

During this high-school period I caught my first glimpse of the thing called sex. A farm girl is supposed to be thoroughly cognizant of the ways of life; but I was naïve in contrast to the town children, and I became aware of the whispered titterings of the girls and the taunting remarks of the boys.

Other adolescents have suffered from this secretive atmosphere, I am sure, but when it reached the form of scribbled words in notebooks, elemental designs on privy walls, it made me shrink and turn a little cold. I was not clever at hiding my feelings, and whenever two or three girls got together and discussed their doubtless very innocent but furtive affairs I was always left out. I don't blame them, for whenever they tried to make me a party to some particularly interesting tidbit I would either be bored or show my disapproval in stony silence.

Perhaps it takes many years of living and suffering to be able to discern between fastidiousness and morality. I have no doubt that these boys and girls, who reveled in a kind of childish dirtiness of mind, lived in after life a much more moral existence than I.

However, my fastidiousness, if not morality, kept me for many years, even when I was on the stage, from contact with the level of consciousness which, as Henry Mencken says, finds sex funny. Of course minor battles continued to rage between my normal human curiosity and my instinctive sense of beauty. I do not suppose that my nobler sense won all these battles, but my instinct was always to withdraw from the world's belittling concept of love.

To my mother's horrified amusement I had read *Camille* when I was about eight years old. Settled in the top branches of a tree with a board across my knees to support the book, the wind swaying the treetop gently, I was in an ecstasy of romance. *Camille* put into my head all sorts of notions which did not go at all with my mother's New England upbringing. By nature a rebel against such things as clothes, schedules for meals, arithmetic, and combing my hair properly, this book, whose



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allure lay outside the well-regulated path of marriage, was the last book I should have been allowed to read. However, the damage was done, and I determined that I, too, should someday know a Bourgevalle.

The impulse which drives every artist to a cross purpose with the established order of what is called a normal life was already shaping my consciousness. *Camille*, my youthful fastidiousness—both served to waken one of the great needs of my life: the understanding of the elements, processes, and realities of what I call creating-love.

One of the most terrible experiences of my adolescence was a visit to my friend Lizzie after her marriage to Johnnie Brown. I found them in a sordid little apartment in Jersey City. Within the year and a half since my last visit I found my once witty, laughing companion—my Lizzie, who was up to any adventure, full of high spirits and that peculiar radiance of the Irish temperament—a somber, careworn creature whom I scarcely recognized. She had had, of course, her first baby. They were poor, and Johnnie, when he came home after a hard day's work, wanted only his food and later, I suppose, to share her bed.

I was stunned and sickened by this eclipse of my playmate. I brooded for days, and in my ignorance I laid it all to marriage. Since marriage had done this to my Lizzie, I vowed I would never be caught in the same trap.

How passionately we feel about these things in our youth! Today, I see both Lizzie and Johnnie as victims not only of man's poor attempts to bring morality into the world in the convention of marriage, but of a deeper illusion concerning the creative principle of life itself.

God knows how my own life might have changed had I married my first beau, Clark Miller. Years later, in moments of disappointment over the ups and downs of a career, I would exclaim half as a joke and half in earnest, "I am going back to marry the iceman." This of course was an extravagant compliment to poor Clark who waited, year after year, for me to make up my mind.

About the time of my first scholastic sortie into Somerville Father came in the kitchen one evening and said to Mother and me, "I met a young chap named Clark Miller today who must have met Ruthie somewhere, because he says he wants to take her out for a sleigh ride next Sunday."

Mother looked at Father with a questioning look, and Father shrugged his shoulders as though to say, "It was bound to come sometime and it might as well be this young chap, who seems honest."

The family consent having been obtained and Sunday arrived, Clark

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drew up in his little cutter with his best horse, and I was bundled up and given into his care by Father.

Clark was tall and sandy-haired, with a homely honest face. He lived down in the valley. His family were Dutch farmers, but Clark began early to be an iceman. His family owned a little lake, from which he cut ice every winter, and I can still see his old white ice wagon standing in the stable yard with "Clark Miller, Ice" painted on it. Once in a while, on a Saturday night, I had remembered seeing him drive through town mounted high on the wagon's scat. He would wave a hello and blush a little at being caught in his old working clothes.

But this Sunday ride was my first close contact with him, if that is not too extreme a phrase. His sleigh flew along in the brilliant December sunshine, with the snow creaking under the runners, while I sat shy and happy beside him. From that moment he remained a definite force in my life. He was something stable and sure to which my thoughts, at least, could turn in times of stress and trouble.

The countryside accepted him as my beau. He took me to all the picnics in the summer and parties in the winter. He was never demonstrative. He seemed content merely to be with me, and I believe he always accepted as a fact, too obvious to be mentioned, that I would someday marry him.

I was thrilled to have a beau—make no mistake about that. In the inner reaches of my consciousness I now had something firm and orthodox to hold to.

When I was about sixteen the dynamic energy that has lasted me all these years was pushing me irresistibly toward the stage, and Mother and I made our first forays into the fastnesses of New York. At last the time had come for me to see whether our boarders' prophecies and the kind words of Marwig were true. Mother and I made for Mrs. Miller's little hotel on West Twenty-sixth Street.

I am sure there never was a more curious sight than this mother and child trying to storm, in the mildest manner possible, a profession of which they knew nothing. Mother had rationalized about my dancing to the extent of encouraging this New York trip, and I believe she was reconciled to "Ruthie's career" as long as she was there with her good sense and calm head.

For me to get an engagement doing the one thing I loved to do would be not only a delight ■ me but also a tremendous boon to the family finances. But how to get that engagement was something of which we were totally ignorant. I remember we left the hotel as soon as we were settled and turned up Sixth Avenue, the first street we came to.

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On the corner of Thirtieth Street was a strange-looking building called Worth's Museum. This type of entertainment has now vanished from New York, but at that time there were several such institutions which housed both a museum of monstrosities and a small theater. Mother and I saw the tiny lobby, the box office, and the pictures of various "acts," and that was all we needed to know. We went in without question.

Agents and managers were a world apart from ours, so we did the most natural thing we could imagine. Mother walked up to the ticket seller in the foyer and said, "My daughter would like to dance for you." We were in no position to understand the twinkle in his eye and the grin that accompanied his, "Sure. Let's see what she can do." Our hopes soared dizzily, and I can remember the feeling of solemn joy when I took off my jacket and sailor hat with the round elastic under the chin and gave them to Mother to hold. Even the little foyer seemed quite a different place when I began to dance.

The man, leaning out of the ticket window, continued to grin not only at me but also at the few passers-by who stopped to enjoy this peculiar spectacle. Having no music, I could not, of course, do even the little dance that Mother and I planned to show him. My one stunt, however, of which I was justifiably proud was what is called a slow kick. I was skillful enough to do this both front and back. I brought my long right leg up until it touched my head in front, and then, after it had slowly reached the ground, I changed feet and with my left kicked the back of my head. I repeated this several times, and was secretly very proud of my skill. Mother, in her little blue bonnet, stood at one side watching with pardonable pride the results of her long hours of Delsarte exercises.

The box-office man, peace to his ashes, must have seen the humor of the situation and thought it too good to keep to himself, for he said when I was halfway through my dance, "That'll do. Come tomorrow morning at eleven for another tryout."

We arrived the next morning promptly at eleven. To me it was an exciting business. I can fancy Mother sniffing a bit at the strange environment. The stage was almost as small as the foyer, with only a feeble light down near the foots. An overworked pianist in shirt sleeves thumped away at a battered piano. He proved to be the only accompanist for both rehearsals and performances. The various "acts" squatted down at the footlights to explain cues to him in the pit below.

I wore a little cream lace dress with three ruffles over a net foundation. My much-beruffled little panties could be seen below. My hair was still brown at this time and hung to my shoulders in loose curls. I danced

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to a piece called "Gavotte d'Amour." However, to me it was not a gavotte of love but of backbends and cartwheels, which I interspersed with many flourishes in order to impress the manager who sat about halfway back in the empty theater trying to appease his boredom with a long black cigar. But some as yet undeveloped charm must have been at work, for I got a job.

I was to dance eleven times a day and receive twenty dollars a week. I leave you to figure out how much each performance was worth.

Nothing could have been more sordid from an artistic point of view than Worth's Museum. Its educative departments were upstairs, and I had to pass through rooms given over to monstrosities in order to reach my dressing room. I can remember hurrying by the triple-headed calves and other unspeakables in great glass jars filled with alcohol. Here the yokels from the country gaped at these dreadful mistakes of nature as well as at the hurrying "artists" of the variety acts.

I have often wondered what aspect of latent talent enabled me to keep this job. I certainly did nothing remarkable in the way of stunts; the other vaudeville dancers did much more difficult feats. Possibly it was my manner of moving that caught their eyes. If a dancer is born with a quality of rhythm it is as changeless as the timbre of a voice. It is God-given, and can never be attained or lost by any method. And so the manner of moving that in later years characterized my Oriental dances must have shown faintly through these simple steps and stunts, which were merely an imitation of something which, at best, was second-rate. Whatever my attribute, it was sufficient to keep me at Worth's for a second week.

I cannot remember what my feelings were during those two weeks, or how conscious I was of myself as an aspiring artist. To be a dancer in those days was like entering an artistic vacuum. The delights of moving in patterns to music was an art which was still in swaddling clothes in the United States. A child like myself had only her instincts and her intuitive response to beauty from which to draw her artistic nourishment. Outside of the perfunctory and at this time moribund ballet at the Metropolitan Opera, dancing consisted solely in the number of cartwheels, roll-overs and splits, kicks and other agilities that a dancer could achieve. Artists like Genevieve Stebbens appeared only occasionally before a small select audience and did not in any way enter the popular currents of the dance as Isadora did so dramatically a little later. The poetry and philosophy of the dance had yet to be born in our country.

I knew without prompting that I must do my little stunts with clever-



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ness and finish or I would not get another job, and it would be quite dishonest to say that I did not enjoy the feeling of superiority which four successive roll-overs, landing in an arabesque, can give. My splits were considered particularly distinguished. I had devised a way of sliding down into them slowly instead of with the bounce of most acrobatic girls. I always ended these splits at the end of a phrase of music and tossed my head with a little air of satisfaction which often brought a round of applause.

Yet, in spite of this pardonable elation, I have several acute recollections of running off the stage after a good burst of applause and weeping in Mother's arms. "If they like this," I sobbed, "they won't like what I really want to do." Oh, how many dear ones have heard that cry from me over and over in the years that passed.

After the Worth engagement one or two vaudeville dates followed. They served to draw the attention of an agent, who asked for my pictures. He said he would try to get me more engagements; but at the end of these few weeks I was faced with a desert of inactivity, and Mother and I were forced to return to the blessed farm which always received us with open arms.

However, we had, during that interval, met the woman who was to be my mother's dearest friend through all her life, and my staunch and loving support when Mother left me. Her name was the Countess Ada de Lachau. Her husband, Fabian, had been an engineer. Since the family had fallen on somewhat evil days, their little daughter, Marie, was singing French songs, sometimes in vaudeville, and more often in people's homes when an evening of entertainment was offered.

Ada has interpenetrated my whole spiritual and artistic life. She is a woman of extraordinary sensitivity and beauty of spirit, a musical composer, something of a poet, and possesses that indefinable quality of putting one in touch with the highest levels of one's own faith. When she entered our lives that day so long ago, she came never to leave.

Months went by. Schooling and farm work were resumed. Suddenly, in the middle of the winter, a wire came from the agent, who said that I was to come at once to the Opera Club in New York. The Opera Club was upstairs in the Metropolitan Opera Building, and began its activities when the opera downstairs was over. If I danced there I would receive as much in one evening as I did for the whole week in vaudeville.

The prospect was thrilling beyond words, but the wire was received in the morning on the heels of a blizzard. The fields were already white. Sleety winds were blowing and it seemed impossible to move

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outside the house. But this was no obstacle to my wonderful mother. She got into action immediately, and within an hour the new toboggan which my father and half-brother Tom had built was dragged out of the shed. As the drifts were now too high for an ordinary sleigh Father took off their shafts and fastened them to the toboggan. It would have been foolish for anyone else to venture into the storm, so Jack, the pony, Mother, and I, with my costumes in a bundle, started alone the four miles to the station. We could not keep to the road, as the drifts were too high, so letting down the fence rails we took to the fields. Sturdy little Jack lowered his head and plowed into the storm. After hours of terrible, freezing tension we reached the station, and put Jack in a livery stable where Father would call for him the next day.

We did not arrive at the Opera Club until ten o'clock that night. I had to change into my costume immediately, and the spectators were at first only a vague ring of blurred faces. Gradually they resolved themselves into men and women in evening clothes, drinking and laughing and finally applauding me.

When I finished I ran off as fast as I could, and I almost stumbled into the arms of a tall man with red hair and a distinguished, smiling face. He bent down to kiss my hand as though I were not an obscure dancer from the country. I forgot all my weariness in a sudden excitement. Whoever this man might be he was my first contact with a world I knew nothing about, a great social world that lay outside my experience but not outside my curiosity. His name, Stanford White, meant very little to me at that time.

Several weeks later I heard from him again. How he found my address I do not know, but to my infinite excitement and joy he invited me to attend the French Ball at Madison Square Garden. Mother was included in order to disarm any refusals. Since it was a masked ball Mother made over my black Spanish dress and pinned up my hair so that I would appear older. She was a very zealous duenna, and although she did not come onto the dance floor I knew that she was watching me, since she did not trust "my eyes which said things they didn't mean." Stanford White held court in his box and danced only once or twice, but he saw that I was generously provided with partners. The great whirling floor filled with masked dancers and the strains of a Strauss waltz was all I needed to feel in heaven.

The French ball in those days was the essence of New York society at its gayest and maddest. I suppose it was a nineteenth-century copy of the French, but it retained a chic and gaiety that seems to have been lost in this generation.

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From this evening of the French Ball to the time, seven years later, I last saw him in the ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria when I presented *Radha* for New York society, Stanford White moved through my life with a strange tenderness and aloofness. To him, at first, I was only one of the many girls of the stage whom he befriended. To me he was a beautiful spirit, a great artist, and a fascinating man whom I ringed about with a halo of idealism.

I knew very well that he had an insatiable longing for the pleasures which finally brought him to his tragic end. I have heard him discussed by respectable people, by envious men, and by jealous women. Even then I sensed the elements in his nature which made for destruction. Obviously our worlds lay far apart. Our point of contact was the immemorial attraction of an older man for youth, with its hopes and dreams and great vitality. He never became my lover, but for seven years he gave me everything I asked of him to further a career which could only stand as a barrier between us.

I can scarcely convey the strange state of emotional tension into which a note from White would throw me. These notes came by special messenger, never through the mail. He called me his little "Wild Flower." In the midst of the coryphees and peach-blondes of that period, the tall, brown-haired, half-child dancer apparently brought to him a note of unstudied enthusiasm and guileless love of life. Although I was emotionally unawakened, he is one of the few men in my entire life who commanded my adoration. One of his notes, arriving unexpectedly with a huge bunch of violets or American Beauty roses would set me trembling, and Mother would say half fearfully, "But, dearie, if you feel this way, do you think you should see him?" Poor Mother in her innocence did not know that wild horses could not have kept me from him. I will never believe that he forced his attentions on any woman. It was not necessary. He was not only fascinating, but unbelievably kind. These qualities in his nature made the whole Thaw tragedy a complete travesty of his temperament.

On the night of the Opera Club I met the man who was to be the first of a long line of distinguished photographers who have honored me with their art. He was James Lawrence Breese, Stanford's running partner in the various exploits which made them so famous at this time—more than that, he was an excellent amateur photographer. He asked me to come to his studio on West Sixteenth Street. I went eagerly, with one object and only one in mind. I knew the value of beautiful photographs and I also knew that I could not possibly afford them at this

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time. Breese had, for that period, very advanced apparatus for taking art pictures. Also he had, to my great joy, some hats and fichus and veils, with which his lady sitters adorned themselves. He said I looked like an early Gainsborough, and he arranged a beautiful wine-colored Gainsborough hat on my head and a fichu around my shoulders. I was enchanted with myself.

He asked me to come a second time, and on this occasion he stopped his restless pacing up and down the room and inquired in a charming, caressing voice if I would pose in the nude. He made it all very artistic and plausible. I had, he was sure, a beautiful body with long lines which he was anxious to capture. I was in a flutter of indecision for a moment or two, but vanity won out and I very chastely stepped out of my clothes.

He took the pictures, I put on my clothes, and we did not meet again for many years. When we did he was in his seventies and no traces of his hard and earthly living could be seen on his delightful, expansive countenance. I was enchanted and a little dismayed, for Jimmy should have repented long ago.

After these brief and exciting flurries in New York the farm, for a while, took up all our time. But not for long. In a very few months, while things went from bad to worse, that old demon, a foreclosed mortgage, drove us away. We decided to move to Brooklyn, as Tom and his wife Josie were raising their family there and Father wanted to be near them.

Mother's heart was almost broken at leaving Pin Oaks. She spent many hours in prayer, affirming that if the time ever came that we all needed to go back to the farm she felt that a way would be opened. With this assurance in our hearts we turned our backs upon the old place, and I left my childhood behind. The little country personnel tells the story more simply and poignantly than I can.

March 6, 1896. T. L. Dennis sold his goods at auction last week. He and his family have moved to Brooklyn. Pin Oaks is now occupied by Mr. Gallucha.





**CHAPTER II: In Search of Horizons:** I DO not know that anything could crush my soul as much as Brooklyn did. All my life the trees and fields had protected me from ugliness. The expanses of the country had given me freedom and cultivated my ecstatic love for the moods of growing things. Overnight the heavy hand of a dark, smelly, and hideous flat tried to shut away all the beloved associations of childhood. I cannot bear to think how often we longed for the sunshine and joyousness of the farm which we had accepted all along as our natural environment. I used to say that I spent five years of my life in Brooklyn as expiation for sins committed in a former life. That was the only way I could account for the discipline of having to live in a city of arid, ugly streets.

It was one thing to be poor on a farm, but quite another thing to be poor in the city. As usual, Mother's marvelous strength of character, supported by her uncomplicated faith in her Methodist God, held the family together. The occasion of an Opera Club triumph, such a short time back, seemed incredibly remote. That world, which I had caught a glimpse of, seemed shut off from me forever.

Our finances were in a more deplorable state than ever. Father had some sort of position downtown, but most of the money he earned went into patents instead of to the family. This made me very bitter at the time, for his carelessness toward Mother seemed inexcusable. Little Buzz had tried to sell newspapers, but being a very shy child had been forced to give it up. Instead he earned a dollar now and then as a model in a life class at Pratt Institute. He had a beautifully formed body, and his lovely head, covered with curls, made him look like a young John the Baptist.

After a few weeks, with many misgivings, Mother decided to leave our flat and rent a house on De Kalb Avenue. In this way she could finance the family through boarders.

The matter of education was resumed at Mother's instigation, partly to give me something to do and partly to mend my broken schooling. The Packer Collegiate Institute meant neither more nor less to me than

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my other places of confinement until I took part, one day, in a service in the little Gothic chapel. The enormous impression it made is not entirely surprising. Until now I had only experienced the comforting but drab little services of Mother's church. Here instead was an organ, a choir singing all the solemn hymns of the Episcopal service. Its impact was so unexpected and dynamic that I might very easily have been drawn toward an extreme. But my devotion to Mother's simple faith exerted an even stronger pull. I had been so sensitive to her moods of despair, when the Bible was her only rock, that I, too, put forth tendrils of my own in an effort to find comfort in her beloved St. John or in the Psalms. They were beginning to feed my own heart in its thwartings and loneliness. Nevertheless, my aesthetic side, more developed perhaps than anything else, found an irresistible attraction in the rituals of the church.

Packer's came to mean to me a protection from the problems of home and the world. Here I made friends; I wrote a little essay on clouds which my English teacher read to the class; I experienced the first comfort of a library and the joys of research. One of my fellow students was a lovely girl named Marion Wiggin. To my abject appreciation she wore long bronze braids wrapped about her head, which made her look like a queen. Her mother was a singing teacher who offered to give me lessons when she learned how much I longed for music. She herself had a beautiful contralto voice, and one day sang for me a very haunting melody, "The Garden of Sleep," by Isadora de Lara. Its melancholy cadences appealed to that streak of sadness in me, and I said to Mrs. Wiggin, "If you will sing that I will dance it."

Mrs. Wiggin was enchanted by the idea, and she suggested that we do it for an audience. It was a matchless opportunity and I pleaded with Mother to buy me some white silk. All my visions of Mrs. Stebbens returned, and the simple Greek costume I made was a tribute to her. On my own inspiration I carried a red scarf to symbolize the poppies that "grew in this garden by the sea."

The concert was given in the old Pach mansion, which was a kind of art center in Brooklyn. About sixty people were in our audience. It was my first experience in classic dancing with bare feet, and was at least the gesture of an independent soul in these days of splits and acrobatics. How pure the quality of the dancing was I cannot tell, but it provided a momentary release into that poetic realm of rhythm which I instinctively knew as my true atmosphere. It was my first and my last opportunity for several years.

As though to appease my restlessness, a gift came, about this time,

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from Stanford White. It was to mean unmixed joy for me. A short time earlier he had written Mother to inquire where I was. Mother, in answering, had told him I was not dancing and was very restless and unhappy. One bright and marvelous day the expressman brought Stanford's reply, a gorgeous bicycle, a shining black miracle of wheels and steering gear. He knew that it would mean a release of energies for me, and I knew it would mean adventures.

At first I rode around and around Brooklyn in the traffic to Mother's consternation; but at length I discovered a path which ran parallel ■ the carriage road, all the way from Prospect Park to the sea. The nights were dedicated to these trips. I seldom shared the paths with anyone. The darkness was moon-filled or starlit, and the instant the nose of my wheel struck this bicycle path a curious change took place. A terrific urge to feel, to experience, to know worlds upon worlds of ecstasy, of beauty and power burst into life. Back on the farm all this inner power and ecstasy of my being, which rose and fell with their own ebb and flood, were matched in beauty with the seasons and the sensuous delights and changing moods of the day and night. Here in Brooklyn I had met the sharp, arid impact of hard, unyielding streets, of tired, hurrying people, of commonplace families on their doorsteps, and all my energies turned in upon themselves in protest. But on these night rides my whole body reached out to identify itself with the night and the solitude, and the monotonous movements of my pedaling legs seemed full of divine rhythm.

The sea ahead always held an unknown magic, though my surface experience knew that I could find nothing but a beach and a few strolling lovers. Occasionally, varying my expedition, I rode slowly across Brooklyn Bridge and watched the lights in the harbor gleam and twinkle in the blackness of the bay. That beautiful spidery structure was the connecting link between the stultifying life I was leading and the future on which I based so many hopes.

These nocturnal rides kept alive in me a sense of power, without which I think I would have stifled to death. But more important than anything else, they fed the three planes of my existence: my body, which must dance or pedal or walk; my sense of external beauty, which must find release through nature or art; my spiritual consciousness, which must steadily grow, though with changing forms, in order to nourish the other two.

Undirected energy—that was the *leitmotiv* of my life for several years. Like a clanging bell, it even took possession of my bicycling. One night Father, reading the evening newspapers, said, "Here's some-

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thing that may interest you, Ruthie. They're going to have a six-day bicycle race for women at Madison Square Garden. You think you're pretty speedy. Why don't you try out? They're giving prizes."

I was dizzy with excitement. Mother demurred a bit, but my pleadings overruled her reluctance. We put on our best dresses and sallied forth to Madison Square Garden.

We found ourselves in a crowd of girls of all ages and appearances. Some two hundred and fifty, I believe, entered the contest. Somehow I survived the brief questionings on my racing abilities, and before I knew it I was gazing with delight on a seventeen-pound racing machine—one of those high-seated, low-handled affairs which would force me to assume the correct racing posture. A pair of brown bloomers, a white sweater and sneakers completed my dashing costume. I was frankly and unashamedly thrilled. Any preoccupation with art, love, and religion went by the boards. I was going to win this race ■ human endurance counted for anything!

Mother came day after day and, sitting well down on the side lines, watched her daughter slowly but surely grind out the days while other contestants passed feebly out of the picture. The first and second days were probably the most eventful. One harrowing episode lingers. Around the supper hour everyone was dead tired and we were pushing our weary course around the ring. Mother had gone out to get me a sandwich, and as I plodded along on the inner rim a tall male with red hair and a striped sweater suddenly emerged from the dressing-room areaway, seized me by my sweater, hauled me off the machine, hurried me along some dark alleys, and thrust me into a room. My heart was in my mouth. Without a word he tumbled me onto a table and with a single movement separated me from my sweater. My panic mounted when he began to push my bloomers well up my thighs. Then suddenly, at a grunt from him, I sank back weakly. He was merely a Swedish masseur, hired to rub down "these dames."

The races came to a triumphant conclusion when I pedaled in to receive sixth prize. As a result both of the prize money and the publicity—for I am fairly sure I had "my name in the paper," even then—I was offered a racing position in a fair at Allentown, Pennsylvania, where I won a state championship from a professional rider. These glories would undoubtedly have produced others had not Mother put her foot down at this point and returned me summarily to Brooklyn.

In 1898 my persistent bombardment of managers' offices was successful. Ed Rice, the producer, engaged me for *The Ballet Girl*. I was now a full-fledged danseuse, for I had a brief solo as a little blue pierrot. To

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my eternal shame I did a toe dance—my only toe dance. I had studied briefly with Mme. Bonfanti, a famous ballerina of her day, and had been stimulated into imitation of Bessie Clayton and Marguerite Clarke, two popular toe dancers of the time. I felt sufficiently competent to be a blue pierrot, but when the engagement was over I had had more than sufficient of standing on my toes.

It was during this engagement that I went back, an actress, to visit Clark in Somerville. Brooklyn and the stage stood between me and my blissful days of the farm, but when I got off at the little station of Bound Brook I was once more the Ruthie Dennis of the old days.

I looked swiftly around to see Clark and his buggy. Sure enough, there he was coming around the corner of the station. He reached out his friendly red hands and, bending his tall figure, gave me two little pecks on either cheek, obviously glad to get that part of the business over with.

I remember once reading in a book that to a certain young man caresses were not unknown but he never made a profession of them. One had to modify even this in relation to my Clark. Perhaps within the sanctities of marriage he might have allowed himself some reasonable abandonments of passion, but in our relationship kisses were salutations and nothing more. My blessed Clark knew nothing about the cult of pleasure for its own sake, but he understood love in its deepest and most loyal aspects.

We clambered into his buggy and started off at a brisk trot toward the hills. For the first half hour I was ecstatic about the autumn colors. Of course my hat came off and I sniffed the lovely, mellow October air. Gossip was exchanged on both sides as we slowly rode past familiar landmarks. I heard from Clark that the crop had been good this year, that his mother was ailing a little, that our delightful old-maid neighbor, Aunt Jane, had somehow managed to buy a new sewing machine, and that the Logan family were rejoicing because Father Logan had gotten the Court House contract. I did not have much to report. The minutiae of the stage did not interest Clark. If I had a job he rejoiced, but I suppose way down underneath he was resentful of the new, intense life that would, year by year, take me farther away from him and the simplicities of the days we had known together. Our conversation languished and, as the morning wore on, I grew sleepy.

With the buggy top laid back, the warm sun beating down, and the monotonous clop, clop of the horse I finally went off to sleep, and leaning against his shoulder I dozed for a while as we rode through the gully that finally brought us to a little valley between the hills.

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Clark drove into the courtyard of an inn and, throwing the lines to the hired man, lifted me up high in his arms and out over the dashboard. The landlord strolled out and we settled down among the other guests until dinner would be ready. The invariable remark, "Well, stranger, what's your politics?" was the opening of immemorial discussions between Democratic farmers and the town-dwelling Republicans.

A friendly faced hostess finally asked us to dinner, and after a bit of wash-up we entered the low-ceilinged dining room. Here everyone ate together, farm hands and guests. The table was loaded with well-cooked, homely food, and when someone praised the biscuits the hostess stood for a moment with hands on hips saying she generally did better. Suddenly I loved all this, because I was already receding year by year from the simplicities of that sweet and wholesome life.

After dinner we tried a new road which forded a little stream where the pebbles lay clear and distinct at the bottom, and Clark stopped for a moment ■ let the horse drink.

Gradually the lovely day wore on, and we stopped at a little place for supper. The harvest moon had now risen, huge and golden over the dark hills. Every hour my city breeding was returning and I grew wide awake, and though this was Clark's usual hour for bed he listened, nevertheless, with interest to my chatter of plans and beaux. Perhaps this latter was unduly tactless, but Clark seemed to be quite unmoved.

As we turned our thoughts toward Bound Brook and the train we grew a little quiet, wondering if I would come again next year. The sadness of the autumn night pervaded us and Clark slipped his arm very shyly along the back of the seat and I laid my head against his shoulder as I looked up at the stars while the old horse went steadily on through the night.

I think I remember this so vividly because the simple elemental woman in me would have liked to marry Clark, bear him children and continue that simple, God-fearing life of the country. But as every woman artist knows, her renunciations are laid, sometimes in agony, at the feet of her work.

I did go back the next year. I made this little pilgrimage, with its infinitely subtle variations of mood, for many years. And when at length they stopped and a long time later I sat in a dingy Somerville restaurant and heard of Clark's death, I knew that the youth of my farm days had gone with him; and ever afterwards the whole countryside was changed.

When *The Ballet Girl* broke up, with back salaries owing all of us,

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I made Augustin Daly my next objective. Mother had obtained an appointment for me and we went over eagerly, expecting to let Mr. Daly see me dance. But alas, we visited the Daly Theater seventeen times before this result was obtained.

For the sixteenth visit an appointment had been made at nine-thirty in the morning. Mother and I arrived with my suitcase and costumes, which we left on the stage. We then went up into the office to keep our appointment. Mr. Daly was not there as usual, but had left word that we were to come back on the following Tuesday. We were depressed and sick at heart and went down on the stage to retrieve the suitcase. A colored janitor was sweeping up the stage, and Mother in desperation said to him, "My daughter and I have been here over a dozen times trying to see Mr. Daly, and now he says to come back next Tuesday. Do you think we should do what he says?" And the colored man, resting on his broom, said quietly to Mother, "Well, ma'am, I advises you to do what he says. I've been doin' it for thirty years." Next Tuesday, when we returned, I was engaged for *The Runaway Girl*.

Once I had the experience of seeing Daly direct. It is difficult to describe the atmosphere that pervaded the theater when he entered, a tall, scholarly figure whom they called The Governor. He managed to produce a different coloring than, for instance, Belasco. Belasco's atmosphere was all theater, concentrated and full of the delightful tension of rehearsal. Daly carried with him a curious aristocracy of bearing, and the rehearsal was conducted like a royal court rather than a theater.

My association with him was always businesslike and impersonal. I was to have been with his company as a solo dancer the following year, when he planned to produce *The Greek Slave*, but he died within that year.

My salary was very small, and finances at home had been sinking lower and lower. Mother at length grew desperate. When *The Runaway Girl* closed she suggested that I go down to Abraham and Strauss and apply for a job as a cloak model. For the first and last time in my life I bought a pair of corsets and, arrayed in my best, under the watchful eye of Mother, who was always suspicious of my neatness, sallied forth to become a businesswoman.

Things were always an adventure to me, and I was fully prepared to allow Abraham and Strauss to provide me with plenty of entertainment. Since I was a perfect thirty-six, I was assigned as cloak model in the evening-gown department. Here, to my great delight, I paraded up and down the showrooms to demonstrate to ladies of uncertain size and

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by no means perfect thirty-sixes how they should look in a Nile green evening gown.

My irrepressible spirits nearly cost me the job. Dull and uninteresting customers were ignored, and, whether I made my sales or not, evening dresses and cloaks were paraded by the hour. Occasionally, when I was desperately needed to show cloaks to a rich customer, I would be found by an irate floor manager practicing dance steps in a dressing room. Only through the intervention of a department buyer, who had taken a fancy to me, was I able to continue—oh, horrors!—to punch the time clock.

Once they sent me over to a New York wholesale house where certain prosperous gentlemen with large paunches tried to chuck me under the chin. I flared up, a lack of diplomacy which was promptly reported to the home office, and I was told in no uncertain terms that the customer must always be satisfied. The fact that I refused to accept such a dictum brought forth a great flurry of recrimination. But somehow I kept the job and bore with it for a few more months. The dressing rooms afforded such a good place in which to dance!

Toward the end of the fourth month on the pay roll, a telegram came again from my indefatigable agent. What excitement! David Belasco was looking for a girl who could dance in the first act of Mrs. Leslie Carter's *Zaza*, and he wanted her quickly for they were sailing for London in two weeks.

The family met to answer several stirring questions. First of all, should I leave a steady salary at Abraham and Strauss for the uncertainties of the stage? Second, how could I leave my job long enough to apply? And, third, what should I wear?

Mother solved all these problems. I heard Father say to her, "Well, I hope she don't lose her head and do something foolish. She's had these dancing jobs before, and when you figure it out week by week it just don't pay. She'd better stay where she is." And Mother answered him, "Yes, Dennie, there's a good deal in what you say; but the child is never happy unless she is dancing, and ■ she could get something steady on the stage it will be what she really wants."

She made me put on my best shirtwaist and pin my belt firmly to my skirt, as she distrusted my shiftless method of dressing. Lastly a little sailor hat crowned my pompadour, and I sallied forth to meet my fate.





**CHAPTER III: Meeting David Belasco:** WHEN I entered my agent's office three other girls were applying for the job. Presently a nice-looking man with an English accent came into the outer room. He was Charlie Millward, stage manager for Mrs. Leslie Carter. One of us was supposed to qualify for the White Ballet Girl in the first act of *Zaza*, and joy, oh joy! it was I. Years afterwards I said to Charlie, "Why did you pick me out from the other girls?" and he answered, "Because you were so sassy." In these days, I suppose, one would call it pep.

I dashed home to tell the family and sever with a grand gesture my business career. Mother was all aflutter. Her first child was leaving home entirely alone. Father was really happy for me, but a little doubtful of the whole proceedings. Moreover, he hated like thunder to have me leave home because even in Brooklyn we used to have lovely long Sunday walks together.

The next two weeks were busy enough to satisfy even my uncontrollable energy. Clothes were contrived from somewhere, friendships established with the other girls in the company. And underneath it all was the feeling that something bigger than I could grasp was happening.

Emotional undercurrents were sweeping around the family. Father's resentment at my career was growing. Later it became so great as nearly to part us. Mother was in a panic at the distance that would separate us should anything happen, and wrote a touching little note to Stanford White, telling him of her fears.

White answered immediately, saying, "Have no fear. I am going to London myself, and will look in on her, and meantime, if it will make you feel any happier, here is the amount of her return fare from London which you may bank on this side. In this way you can relieve your mind."

I don't know how we justified our acceptance of these gifts which from this time on were frequent. Surely Mother sensed to some degree, and I knew quite well, that he was attempting in a roundabout, charming manner to make me his mistress.

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In two short weeks we left for London. I had my first glimpse of Mrs. Carter just before we sailed. She was sitting in her specially built dressing room which was shipped everywhere with her when she went on tour. This was my first encounter with a star, and the famous Mrs. Carter dazzled me with her radiant smile. I had time only to observe the red hair and the long fingers with the red nails before I was whisked out. I did not see David Belasco until we arrived in London.


We reached London after a stormy voyage which I survived with only moderate grace. On the ship I quickly made friends with the company, and was a little disconcerted to have Mark Smith, one of the leading men, come up to me the first day out and say, "I've just got a letter from Stanford White, telling me to keep an eye on you." I recovered enough to say pertly that I hoped he could manage his own affairs with one eye, but I said a little prayer of thanks to Stanford for his constant thoughtfulness.

The whole crossing was a haze of indistinct impressions. I did sense, however, that in some way this arrival in a new world marked the end of a childlike quality in me. Not only did this journey signify my passage from childhood to the whirlpool of adolescence, but it also brought me forth from the clouds of romantic wishing and dreams of love to the stern actualities of life and the stage.

For the first time I was surrounded by unknown personalities and strange experiences. I had to make my own decisions, and Mother was not around to take the edge off disappointments. I was, moreover, grappling with another art, for I had a tiny part to play in the last act of *Zaza* and the lines had a curious significance when I look back upon them.

This fifth act was set in the garden of the music hall in Paris. After the froth and fury of poor Zaza's life she had come to a place of peace and attained the rank of a great artist. I was a little flower girl with a basket of violets. Zaza, dressed all in white lace, with a long train, her marvelous red hair dressed in an extraordinary but becoming fashion, a huge black hat topping this creation, her arms filled with roses, would come sweeping out of a stage door to her barouche, where an old horse with a sagging back hip patiently waited for the act to be over so that he could go home to a late supper.

I would then step forth from the shadow of the tree and, holding out a little bunch of violets, say in adoring tones, "Oh, Mme. Zaza, tell me, how did you come to be so famous?" And she, leaning toward me with an unforgettable gesture of gracious condescension, would



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answer, in her rich, vibrant voice, often choked with real emotion, "Through much misery, much grief, much work, and a little luck."

Mrs. C., as everyone in the company called her, and I never liked each other. I was much too fresh and cocksure a youngster, and occasionally I presumed to set aside such things as rehearsal hours and the care of my wardrobe. She was frankly annoyed by my mingled admiration and contempt for what seemed to me then to be the needless misery both of her own life and the parts she so successfully interpreted.

At this period I was bumptious and critical of my superiors and sometimes self-willed to an annoying degree. My sole excuse was that I had no outlet of expression, and my active mind had to busy itself with something. Though I had been hired for the tiny part of a dancing girl in *Zaza*, I had never been called upon to take a step, nor did I practice voluntarily, partly because I was constitutionally lazy, and partly because there were no private or public studios in those days where young dancers could go and practice. There were, to be sure, a few dancing teachers, but they were sunk in ballet or ballroom dancing and were of little use to a young person with imagination. My body, fortunately or unfortunately, has always been supple and strong. This meant that I spent little time on its development.

This little scene from *Zaza* was my first attempt at speech, and Millward, who was continually begging me to lift my voice so that I could be heard, must certainly have been moved by faith and not by hearing when he handed me, one day, the part of Mme. Dufresne, the wife, to understudy. Of course I immediately became in my eyes the Rejane of America. But when, one awful night, the girl who played the part did become sick and I went into a rehearsal I was so paralyzed that poor Millward gave me up in despair, and an older, more experienced member of the company was hurried on.

I was so humiliated that I vowed I would play that part or die in the attempt. When in New York they gave a revival of *Zaza*, after *Adrea*, the only failure David Belasco ever had, I finally played the part of Mme. Dufresne to Millward's reasonable satisfaction.

Those days in London gave me my first sight of royalty. Everybody who was anybody came. We played six or eight weeks to packed houses, and all grades and shades of society came and occupied the Royal Box; but being a Victorian age, there were certain social barriers between the womenfolk of royalty and Mrs. Leslie Carter. They applauded her superb performances, but because she was a divorced woman she was

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not asked to certain social functions where otherwise she would have been welcome.

As I was a painfully obscure member of the company no one paid any attention to me, and I was able to go about by myself and discover some of the glories of that England from which my father came. Standing one unforgettable day in the vast silences of Westminster Abbey and feeling as though I lived in a dream, I murmured, "I'm really here, and this is Westminster." Moving softly about, looking into the up-turned faces of the gray marble knights and kings, sensing the essence of the whole British nation in this great temple, walking in the cloisters and finally stumbling upon a tiny chapel called the Chapel of St. Faith, I slipped to my knees in spontaneous praise for this great experience that life had given me. Nor has my gratitude for the gift of life ever wavered, and upon every return to London I visit the chapel of St. Faith and breathe this same prayer of praise.

England was a source of great wonder and excitement to me. In a letter to Mother at this time I put some of my feeling into words.

Yesterday Downing Clark [Belasco's personal representative] and Nelly Stuart [my roommate] and I sallied forth to Buckingham Palace. Of course we rubbered for all our necks would stand to see everything, and Clarky got up a fire of remarks about the Palace and the gardens and the crowds and the Queen. To him everything English is far superior to anything produced anywhere else. By and by Clarky gave us a poke and bade us look up at a certain window where a couple of Eastern potentates were to be seen moving about with their red uniforms, black faces and huge white turbans. "The old lady's having lunch!" he cried, "and those are her Indian attendants, God bless her." "Well, I've no objection, I'm sure," drawled Nelly in such withering tones that he subsided for a moment. Then Nell, whose father was an Englishman, and he started to straighten out the genealogy of the Queen and ended in a very heated argument as to whether the Queen belongs to an English or a German family, and so forth and so forth, while I had time to look a good bit at the palace and to ponder considerably about many things.

Suddenly from one of the arches that leads to the Palace court came some red-uniformed soldiers, some outriders in dark colors on black horses and then a quiet-looking carriage drawn by more black horses, and in that carriage accompanied by some of her family was a little old fat lady in black. She had a serene modest air and bowed slightly but graciously to the waiting and cheering crowds who bordered the drive. That little lady was Victoria, Queen of England.

Apparently I had too much of an Englishman's blood in me to escape the general infectious patriotism. One night between the acts of

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*Zaza* I went across the way to see *The American Beauty*, a popular musical play of the time. I had been watching the play for a few minutes when the curtain went down on the first act. A great buzzing rose from the house, and someone stepped from behind the curtain. "Mafeking has been relieved!" he shouted, and promptly the whole theater went crazy. The audience shouted and hurrahed, and the orchestra struck up "God Save the Queen." I was fascinated. It was all I could do to tear myself away, but when I returned to my theater I found all the English members of the company celebrating with equal zest. The celebrations lasted all night. Nelly and Clarky and I adjourned to a little restaurant where, with the assistance of the other patrons, we carried on the discussion of Englishmen versus Americans until dawn.

My humble position was unmistakable to everyone except two exceptional men, Stanford White and David Belasco. Stanford had arrived in London, and promptly took me under his wing. His attention was discreet and persistent, and Belasco either observed it himself or was told about it by others. The result soon manifested itself. I had known that D. B., as we affectionately called him, had been watching me rather more intently than was necessary for several days. Finally during a performance he said, "After the curtain goes down, come to my office. I want to talk ■ you."

His office was a little room, high upstairs in the theater. It was quite late at night after the performance and everyone else had gone. I quieted my apprehension with curiosity.

I lifted myself up on top of an old desk, as there was not much furniture in the room. D. B. drew up a chair near my feet. He took my hands and began kissing the palms in the curiously soft, half-innocent, half-sinister way he had. As I well knew his predilection for fresh young faces, I was thoroughly frightened. I knew that I was regarded as an unconscionable young flirt, but I blithely assumed that everyone knew I did not mean a thing by my pert responses and the invitation in my mischievous eyes.

D. B. had heard that Stanford White called frequently at the theater for me. All the women he knew in the theater were ambitious. Many of them had lovers. It was beyond his comprehension that the battle for name and fame could be won alone, unaided by what our charming French friends call a "protector." He had no reigning queen at the moment and in this idle hour he was apparently seeking to find out what manner of girl this new one was.

He began by asking me what I wanted most to do. When I said to

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dance he looked a little puzzled, for I had come to him much more as an actress than a dancer. But he was not put off. He looked at me quietly for some time before he started to speak.

Between the insidious gentle sweetness of his personality and his almost Oriental refinement of speech and gesture, I soon began to realize what his idea for my future was. He wanted to make me a star, and he suggested that Stanford White might be glad to back the venture. In print this sounds very cold and blatant, but to him it was the natural order of things. I think he was really acting in accordance with his own concept of good for me. That was the way his mentality worked. He even went so far as to indicate that if Stanford White were not interested, he would be willing to bring stardom to me himself.

I grew cold with fear. All I could think of was Mother and the money Stanford had given her for my return passage. Surely the end of everything had come. Not only was my trip to London a failure, but all my acting ambitions had come to nothing.

What I said and did in his office I cannot remember, but I must have looked my dismay and fear convincingly, for presently he stood up and took my hands in a most friendly way and said, "Dear child, I'm sorry I frightened you."

He never approached me in this manner again. I stayed with him for five years in great contentment and never lost an opportunity to learn what I could from him. I grew to love him dearly, both for his genius and his truly lovable soul. After his death, when I wandered through the auction rooms where his lovely treasures were being sold, I breathed a little prayer of gratitude for all that he had meant in my expanding life.

But this midnight encounter with Belasco taught me a lesson I badly needed; and Stanford's valet added the moral to it, late one night in Stanford's suite in the Hotel Cecil.

Stanford had come to the stage door to get me after the performance. He was on his way to Paris and wanted me to have supper with him. After supper he took me to his suite at the Cecil. We were sitting on a couch when his valet came into the room to bring him some cigarettes. As he started to go he turned and said, "Will you have breakfast for one or two, sir?"

Stanford laughed about this for hours. He said the look on my face was something to conjure with. When the man left he threw back his head in a characteristic way and roared. It took me some time to see the humor. All I was aware of was the harrowing similarity between this episode and the one with D. B.

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The valet had brought me suddenly to my senses. How could Stanford possibly know what was in my mind? Perhaps he thought my naïveté was merely a clever blind. After all, I had accepted his help for many years; I always showed how glad I was to see him, and even ■ I was a little timid before the intensity of his lovemaking he had a perfect right to assume that I would respond one day.

I cannot claim that standards of conventionality determined my actions. But the truth was that at twenty-two I was not emotionally awakened to the full significance of love. However, I had enough sense to know that our relationship could not go on as it had been, and when I left him that night I had made up my mind not to see him again for a long time. That long time stretched into five years, and my next and last meeting with him was a sudden and emotional one—after *Radha* had come into being.

Running through all my life at this time was my tremendous desire to understand and fulfill my creative instincts. Just before we sailed for home I went over to the Paris Exposition to visit Loie Fuller's tiny theater, which she was sharing with a remarkable little Japanese actress, Sadi Yaco.

In America I had seen many imitations of Loie Fuller. She probably suffered more imitators than any woman alive, so I was somewhat prepared for her astonishing and beautiful performance. She was not, in the strict sense of the word, a dancer. She had a heavy body and never a very polished technique, but she was an inventive genius and brought a wealth of richness to both the dance and the stage. A little of this I recognized that night, but my real excitement and wonder was stirred to an unbelievable pitch by the extraordinary acting of Mme. Sadi Yaco.

For the first time I beheld and understood the beautiful austerities of Japanese art. Here, in her dancing (she was, of course, both dancer and actress), was the antithesis of the flamboyant, overblown exuberance of our American acrobatics. Here was a costuming in which the colors were vivid, yet so related to the mood that they seemed to emanate from a different palette. Her performance haunted me for years, and filled my soul with such a longing for the subtle and elusive in art that it became my chief ambition as an artist. From her I first learned the difference between the words "astonishing" and "evoking."

On the creative plane my acting relationship with D. B. and Mrs. Carter had begun its long apprenticeship; but my dancing life, stirred by this experience, was to go through a long period of gestation and bring forth, years later, a new art form.

Belasco left us in London and went back to New York to prepare

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for David Warfield in a homely little Jewish play called *The Auctioneer*. I had a small part in the cast, which grew because of my irrepressible giggle. One day at rehearsal I was entertained by something that happened. I infected the two other girls who shared the scene with me, and we all giggled. The company began to smile, and soon the gaiety spread. D. B., pulling a lock of his hair down over his eye, said, "Rather amusing. We'll keep it in." Thereafter we were called The Giggling Girls, and had our little scene to ourselves.

While this play was running, Belasco was at work on one of his greatest efforts and successes, *Madame Dubarry*, adapted from the play by Pierre Berton and, of course, starring Mrs. C. It was an amazing production, costing a fortune and bringing together the total instrumentation of the stage in the most perfect and ample way New York had seen up to this time.

One of the coverlets for Dubarry's bed was made of point lace studded with brilliants and bordered with Russian sable.

The excitement of the rehearsals, the gathering of the new company, the plans for the five marvelous acts, was a thrilling and profitable adventure. During the six weeks of intensive rehearsals, some lasting until we met the milkman on his rounds, we all felt we were blessed with an experience we would never know again.

To watch David Belasco direct a play was to see a really great artist at work. He always sat at a little table near the footlights, pulling the famous lock over his very white brow. Glasses dangled from his neck. Secretaries stood near to take notes, and in the quietest of voices he indicated the atmosphere of the scene. I can hear him saying to Campbell Gollan in the second act of *Dubarry*, "Yes, Gollan, that is one very good way of doing it. But suppose we try another, and if the second feels right to you let's play it that way." He exerted an almost hypnotic stimulus on actors. To watch him direct a scene was like watching an engineer put together the pieces of a model bridge.

With Mrs. Carter, when she rehearsed with us, he was always very gentle, although the publicity department let it be known that in private he pulled her around the stage by her long red hair. I do not know what their relations were, but when he began to put on other productions with other stars Mrs. Carter became morose. Often on long train journeys when the day was hot, I would pass her open stateroom and find her sobbing quietly by the window. On the night of the success of Blanche Bates in *The Darling of the Gods*, we had a tempestuous evening with her in a Brooklyn theater. She grew hysterical and no one could quiet her. D. B., of course, was at the opening of Bates, and



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poor Mrs. C., I suppose, felt herself neglected and no longer the one supreme star of his life. Her maid, the silent, efficient, solemn Susan, whom we all loved and feared, finally got her quieted enough to continue with her scene, and we all breathed a sigh of relief.

Each season, when we started off with Mrs. Carter, a wave of gossip would inquire first of all the name of the company manager. We all pitied him, for on his luckless head fell the responsibility of "bringing her back alive" at the end of the season.

When the great center of gravity, D. B., departed from her life, Mrs. Carter fell to pieces. He and he alone knew how to play upon the full orchestra of her personality.

D. B. possessed a full-grown and formidable temper, but he seldom showed it. I have only one remembrance of it. I was riding with him in a taxi from the station in Boston. Mrs. Carter was to open in *Dubarry*. As we rode along he noticed some posters of the company, and evidently his publicity man had not carried out his orders. He muttered something under his breath, and snatching the glasses off his nose threw them on the floor of the taxi and ground them with his heel. That was all he said and did, but I gave hurried praise that I was not in the shoes of that publicity man.

D. B. never relaxed his interest in me. To him I was an unknown quantity. With several members of the company we were sitting one night in the Childs Restaurant at Sixty-sixth Street and Ninth Avenue. One of his conceptions of the perfect night life was to gather about him the few who would amuse him in his relaxed hour after the show. I think on these occasions we had riotous banquets of crackers and milk, and once in a while an oyster stew. D. B. and I were on neutral ground at this time, yet he always kept an eye on my doings and never failed to ask me about my beaux. This night, sitting across the marble-topped table, the question of marriage came up. He turned to someone of the party and, gesturing toward me, said in that half-rumbling, half-amused way he had, "No man will ever hold her for long except through her mind. She's all brain." This was a little dig at my lack of emotional response to him.

Both the curse and the glory of my life is that I have always wanted to do too many things. I used to say that if a person wanted to keep alive, in distinction to merely existing, he should change his occupation every ten years. Of course, you'll say, this is sheer nonsense. How can anything be brought to perfection, how would money be gotten, how could one's identity as a specialist be attained? That is all very well, but

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there is another point of view. Whatever our profession is we slowly build up a personality from the actions and accretions of that profession. A priest carries about with him an air which is clearly identified with the priesthood. The actor has his easily distinguishable mannerisms, and the college president is very proud to be—a college president. Yet why should this be? We are, first, last, all the time, the sons of God and we should never forget it. Our individuality is based upon something much vaster than a circumscribed profession. We should be in a position to bring our intelligence to any challenging objective and be at no disadvantage. Now I want to write. Once I used to sing. All the time I have wanted to act as well as dance.

In those five years with Belasco, listening every night to Mrs. Carter and the other beautifully trained actors, it was inevitable that dancing should sink to a secondary place for a time. Once I went so far as to steal from somewhere a script of *Zaza*. I took it home and studied the part of Zaza and, in private, gave what I thought was an excellent imitation of the pyrotechnics of Mrs. C. I also studied the part of Dubarry, but I did not conceal this fact so modestly. When Mrs. C. was taken ill in San Francisco someone suggested me to D. B. He replied, "Very well, let her try it." But the publicity man, very wisely, talked him out of it.

Yes, I might have been an actress, had I not been swept into the current of an art which possessed me even more. My tendency for acting has reared its head several times in the last twenty years. Once in a Biblical pageant drama called *Miriam, Sister of Moses*, written by my good friend, Constance Smedley, and produced in the Greek theater at Berkeley, California; another time in *The Gift of Eternal Life*, by Albert Herter, which enchanted me with its beautiful, flowing language; again in *Lexington*, a patriotic pageant, written by Sidney Howard; and more recently in *Monna Vanna* at Walter Hartwig's theater in Ogunquit, Maine, and in *The Royal Family* and *Salome* at Asheville, North Carolina.

Of course I am not a good actress. I am merely effective, but I established to my own satisfaction that a creative worker can be a multiple artist. In these Belasco days I was merely a youngster, overcharged with unrealized powers. I had to keep busy at something. Even in this absorbing environment my dancing could find no means of expression. The tiny dance that I did in the fourth act of *Dubarry* was repeated each evening, and demanded nothing but a routine of charming steps in a lovely Louis XV costume of blue feathers.

Anything—anything—was the cry in these days to keep my imagina-

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tion and energies occupied. It was a thrilling day when D. B. turned me into a screaming *sans culotte*. He had tried out a number of girls, but no one seemed to have quite the quality of ferocity that he wanted. When, at last, he crooked his finger at me I had an intuition that this was to be my big moment. With a terrific shout I hurled myself into the scene and led the mob toward the tumbril on which poor Dubarry was being borne away. My violence quite electrified the company and I was, of course, very pleased with myself and not at all surprised when D. B. gave me one of his quiet smiles and indicated that the part was mine. Ever after I waited through three acts for my one moment of glory.

This supreme and stirring scene was nicely balanced with a little solo I was allowed to sing during one of the ensemble dances. Some words had been put to the little French tune of "Amaryllis." As I always was a little uncertain of my beat, I had occasion always to look into the adoring blue eyes of our small German orchestra leader. He would give me a nod of encouragement and a wide smile and off I would go, trilling merrily. I had a pretty little soprano voice, quite untrained, and I suppose most uncertain musically, but it had a quality that floated out pleasantly on the lovely strains of the "Amaryllis."

In Honoria Donner, or Pat, a girl in the company, I found my safety valve. She was a high-strung, poetic creature with a delicious sense of humor. One afternoon in St. Louis, while on the *Dubarry* tour, Pat and I went into a cheap little restaurant which had a small orchestra playing during the mealtime. We were sitting listlessly at our table, our fund of jokes exhausted for the moment, when the orchestra began to play a malaguena. The music went through me like a shock. I did not have the audacity to spring up then and begin to dance, as I did years later in the Arab coffeehouse, but instead I sat still and suffered, every fiber of me responding to the rhythm, every nerve stiffening in my effort to stay in my chair. I turned to Pat and cried, "I may do many things in my life but I'll never be anything but a dancer!"

Pat always understood. Without her I could not have survived the long one-night stands. Her good spirits were irrepressible, and when things grew heavy-hearted she always challenged me to liven them up.

Sometimes our antics were received with joy and sometimes we were sent about our business. I gave full expression to my variegated talents in the dressing rooms, for I had a lively command of German, Irish, and Negro dialects and I was never backward in using them. Dressed in an unexpected combination of costumes, I would parade up and down the dressing room during a performance, trying to stir up some-

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thing to relieve my unutterable boredom with *Madame Dubarry*, which ran on and on. Poor Millward did not appreciate my comic talents, for he always had to send a callboy up three flights to get me down in time for my cues, or come pounding upstairs himself when our roars of laughter filtered onto the stage.

Hamilton Revell played the part of Cossé and he did nothing to improve my manners. When I wanted to act out some romantic or humorous scene he would support me to the last line, and Patsy Donner would be a full-throated audience.

Now all of this led, as all things in the theater did, back to Belasco. Cossé had let him in on many of our jokes, and D. B. would stop me in some shadowy corner of the stage and ask me to reenact them for him. I did not think he was being more than kind and friendly until one day in New York he asked to come and see me at the little apartment on Fiftieth Street which Mother had taken for me.

He wasted no time telling me why he had come. For some months, the idea had been growing in his mind of having a comedy written for me in which he could develop me as a new star and comedienne.

To say that I was thrilled and flattered would be to put it mildly. But in that moment I found myself in the hands of my own destiny and saying things that sounded strange even to my own ears. It was inconceivable that I should refuse, and yet all I could answer in a confused, incoherent stream was, "Oh, D. B., this is a wonderful idea, and I am pleased that you think I could be amusing—but something is stirring in me that I can't find a name for. I must do that, whatever it is. I know you'll be disgusted with me—you'll think I'm a little daft, since I can't tell you what it is I want to do. It's something even more than being an actress."

Belasco smiled slightly, and left the flat without pressing the point. He must have thought I was insane, and needless to say he never referred to it again.

I tried, after that visit, to analyze myself and find out why I was seemingly gay and giddy, when I was, in reality, becoming aware of so many strong currents in my life. I knew that an awful restlessness was stirring me and that I had no deeply satisfying place to direct my energies. Nothing in my life seemed resolved. At this time I was existing in the dramatic theater where music and dancing were casual. At home no one played, and I had no opportunity to practice. I could seldom afford a concert, and on the few times that I was taken I would be in such a state of thwarted suffering, listening to music that I passionately longed to dance to, that I dreaded rather than enjoyed these concerts. The

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banked fires of the dance were smoldering within me and made me realize that, while I enjoyed and had a certain talent for the drama, the dance was my true destiny, although nothing was being done about it. My refusal to Belasco was an intuitive determination to allow nothing to interfere with the remote possibilities of the future.

Besides the question of undirected physical and emotional energies, there was the still undeveloped element of spiritual realization. This aspect of my consciousness had been stirred into expression only a few times, partly by Mother in intimate and lovely hours of prayer, partly by the moods evoked by the chapel and service at Packer, but never by a deep illumination in my own being.

Lying on the couch, one day in the little flat, wondering where I was going and what I was doing, I found the key to this mystery. It had lain on the shelf above my head for a long time but was not discovered until this Sunday afternoon when I reached out an arm to pick up the only book in our small library I had not read. It proved to be a brown-covered book called *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, by Mary Baker Eddy.

I began to read that early afternoon and went on until suppertime. I laid it aside reluctantly to get supper for Buzz and me. I read on through the evening and part of the next day before I finished it.

I had never been even dimly aware of the tremendous new world that had now opened before me. What happened in my consciousness might indeed have been achieved by any of the other scriptures of the world, but the fact remains that it was this particular book which revealed a new dimension to my thought and feeling.

Mother was away at this time, and I did the work of the house willingly enough. Sometimes I helped Buzz with his lessons or perhaps I wrote a letter to Father. But all the hours I could spare were spent either in reading this book or in going for long walks by myself. I seemed to have joined that class of thinkers who are in the dawn of ideas, eager for a blaze of light.

Old Fifth Avenue in those days was a lovely quiet street, free, in the evenings, of even horse buses and carriages. The play had closed for the summer, and I would go out about nine o'clock and walk slowly down toward Washington Square, and then turn and come back the other side. The old brownstone steps offered friendly rest spots where I would sit and try to realize with my surface mind this whole business of a world made of Mind and not of matter.

To sense the power of thought as a vast discovery of the soul occupied me for long hours at a stretch. Sometimes a young blade, walking

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up the Avenue to keep a rendezvous, would look at me a little curiously, wondering, I suppose, why I sat so motionless on the steps. Or a policeman would pause a moment and consider whether he should ask me to move on. But no one ever spoke to me, and my strolls were empty of any outward incident but filled with wonder and a strange inward vibration which was unlike anything I had ever known before.

This definite condition of spiritual ecstasy remained with me for some weeks and then gradually faded, and left as a residue a love of spiritual things and a realization of metaphysical values which has been with me always. During this period I had risen temporarily out of my obsession in art, that first god of my trinity, but the dawning awareness of the forces that were to control my whole life were growing upon me. Perhaps trinity is too premature a word to use; art and religion, not love, were my mental and emotional concerns at this time. When within one personality exists the possibility—and I believe it nearly always does—of the artist and the saint, the efforts of reconciliation dominate one's entire consciousness. I am quite sure that there never has been a saint who has not at some time wished to see limned upon the external world the image of his inward rapture, nor does the artist ever pass a year of his life that he does not wish the whole mechanism of his so-called art life at the bottom of the sea so that he might know true liberation. So if we regard the saint and the artist as two sons of the same mother, we shall perhaps understand them a little better.

Many saints have written of the beauty of their inward states, and to the degree that the words have also been of beauty have we retained them eagerly in our race consciousness, so that in the end to some degree the saint does become the artist. But how far the artist becomes the saint is yet to be understood. I do not wish to appear other than I am. Above all not to assume the saint when only the artist is present and not even to assume the artist when only the faulty confused human woman is present, but the visible career as well as the subjective regions which gave rise to that career were all taking shape in these deeply conscious moments of my spiritual adolescence.

At the end of summer I joined the company again, but not without wondering whether I should return to the stage, for the spiritual adventure I had been through had left me deeply stirred. However, the demands of rent and the grocery bill forced me back into the routine of the company.

This was to be my last year with D. B. and a momentous one. During that time all my old confusions and indecisions—should I act or dance?—were to fall away and I was to know instantly what I must do, and do with my whole being.



**CHAPTER IV: New Worlds of the Dance:** **THOUGH** outwardly I returned to just another season with D. B., greeting old friends again, and preparing for a tour, something vital and new had entered my consciousness. The emphasis had shifted from the outer world of D. B.'s plays and personality and of my unimportant theatrical life to the inner world of visions and illuminations.

Time and again I have been brought back sharply to the fact that art cannot save our souls. But at twenty-five I had arrived at no such conclusions. I did not see clearly the dividing line between the territories of love, religion, and art.

Most of the time I lived the intense and eager existence of a young artist feeling her powers, of a woman not yet aware of but intuitively realizing the human glory and tragedy of love, and of the pilgrim vaguely conscious of being on her way to something greater than herself. Yet most of the time my surface motivation was to keep a job. I was in reality a little tradesperson with something to sell.

On the long one-night stands with *Dubarry*, I had no human companion for my spiritual life. My brown *Science and Health* and the Bible lay in my suitcase and were read intermittently.

Patsy, my inseparable pal, was a Roman Catholic and I used to admire in a puzzled way the devotion which got her up in time for six-o'clock Mass. She did this rain or shine, and then, apparently, dropped the whole matter. Of course she did no such thing. She carried at the back of her mind the comfort and sense of protection of church. Many times, in the midst of my intellectual wrestlings with matters which troubled her not at all, I envied her uncomplicated faith. On rare occasions when I went to Mass with her I was seduced by the atmosphere and somber beauty into wondering whether I could sustain myself in my spiritual path without an organization to support me.

This question has never been fully answered. Once in London, sitting in our garden in St. John's wood, I was reading a description of Buddhism in Japan. It told of Buddhist temples with their wealth of beautiful images, of the quiet dignity of priests as they moved about

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the altars, of the perpetual rising of incense into the great shadows of the temple, of the ceaseless stream of pilgrims who laid a flower at the foot of the Buddha and murmured their allegiance to him and his teaching. "I take refuge in Buddha. I take refuge in the Law. I take refuge in the Order."

I was irresistibly drawn to this picture where so much beauty was mingled with such deep devotion, but suddenly I realized with a shock that my intensely Protestant soul was getting the same satisfaction from this heathen religion that I would have gotten from the Catholic Church.

No one could possibly understand my strange sense of guilt, for under the guise of art I had been slowly brought into an atmosphere of unthinking reverence and blind devotion.

Though I was on tour again in my regular capacity of actress and had to do a good job in order to bring in the money that was so badly needed, I was questioning daily in my mind whether I belonged any longer in this environment, and had I not found a definite answer to this question I would undoubtedly have quit the stage forever.

This entire winter was spent trying to understand these new elements of art and spiritual awakening and love. Love was the least awakened of all. Once I went out to Myron Pritchard's little home, where he lived with his mother on the outskirts of Boston. When I saw him again all that had happened to me in my stage life, all the little vulgarisms of manner and speech that swirled around me in the dressing rooms, suddenly fell away and I became the little girl he knew from the farm.

That side of me which belonged to New England and desired nothing better than to live a normal Boston life as wife and mother rose in me whenever I saw Myron or received one of his letters.

I suppose we all of us say, "Except for the grace of God, there goes John Bunyon." If the gentle Emerson could say that he contained within himself the potentiality of all crime, the rest of us can plead guilty to any of the darknesses of the human dream. This makes us doubly grateful for those who demand of us only the vibrations of light. Myron was one of these, and I think my eager responses to life were a great attraction to him. But he never bound me in any way, except, perhaps, through the most subtle binding of all, an unfailing interest in the development of my life.

Romance was still unrelated to the realities of life. Hamilton Revell and I were dear but quite unsentimental friends, and I remember a strange and sad little scene that took place in Chicago.



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We were having coffee and sandwiches after the show in his beautiful suite. He was standing by an upright piano and I was thinking what an extraordinarily handsome man he was when he began to tell me about an unhappy love affair of his youth in Paris. Young and impressionable, he met a *café chantant* girl who was not only famous and notorious, but extravagant as well. Cossé was not rich, so it must have been his real beauty and magnetism which attracted her. They became lovers and, like poor little Camille, had a brief idyl in the country outside of Paris. As Cossé recounted this story and moved up and down the room smoking cigarettes, I sat wide-eyed and breathless, a whole new world opening before me. He had loved this girl. In spite of the tawdry externals of her life he had discovered a simplicity and sweetness in her which enabled him to remember her with joy.

Yet this was the first time that I actually knew someone who had lived out an affair in this romantic manner. I could not sleep that night. I still fancied, in spite of my rebellions against marriage, that all one's loves should end in marriage. It never occurred to me that I would ever live with anyone, and when Cossé, who had been so close a friend, spoke with such an unmoral attitude of his relations with this woman, a kind of horror was opened to me, revealing a world that I supposed existed only in books.

I thought a great deal about it, and only brought myself to deeper confusion. My experiences on tour did nothing to clarify this confusion, for all my small romances were uncertain or perplexing. Singing or dancing men of the company paid me attention, but my intuition rather than experience told me that they were dear and affectionate friends but not lovers. My letters to Mother at this time were long and artless. One special-delivery letter, that I labored over until late at night, had to do with a delightful Irish comedian named Jack, who was for a while my cavalier in the theater. My letter was concerned with a midnight scene in which Jack told me he thought we had better not be seen so much together as people might "talk" about me. I explained all this to Mother in the language of this delicate era when "good women" and "bad men" were the order of the day. A little later I poured out my disillusionment when I learned that Jack had turned from my chaste companionship to the arms of a shapely but notorious chorus girl in the company. I wept my desire to save Jack from a dire fate of which I had no exact knowledge but a distinct apprehension. I recounted the tears of separation and the kiss that Jack pressed upon my brow as he said that "it was better for me that he go," and I volubly demanded advice, which Mother, who distrusted my romanticism, did not provide.

MYSELF AT FIVE

Photo by Howard

MYSELF, FATHER, BUZZ AND MOTHER IN BROOKLYN

Photo by Gardner & Co.



# EGYPTIAN DEITIES

"NO BETTER TURKISH CIGARETTE" 



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The few older men who frankly tried to seduce me only frightened me and produced a strange aversion to what I thought sex to be, while at the same time driving me back into that dreamland of delicate and vague longings. These dreams partially filled my life, and enabled me, from season to season, to evade an understanding of that inner need which never left me.

This was a period of extraordinarily little activity in my dancing. There were no other dancers in the company; my two little numbers contributed very little to my artistic development, and I was, on top of that, lazy. Routine has always been drudgery to me. I have seldom achieved anything in the dance except when I was so obsessed with an idea that I did not know I was practicing.

As time went on, the atmosphere, the people, the plays, D. B.'s own personality were increasingly inharmonious to my deepest self. I was not unhappy, but I was dissatisfied. My dissatisfaction and undirected energy made me loud and rollicking, which Patsy, my inseparable, did nothing to curb. I can still see us, sharing an upper pullman for purposes of economy. I seemed to be perpetually awake, sitting cross-legged at the end of the bunk, ablaze with some new idea or giggling over a new Irish story. My voice, which has always been high and penetrating, would frequently get us into trouble. Millward's tousled head would appear along the aisle, and growling protests would silence us for a while. But midnight has always found me at the zenith of my talking powers and disapproval had only a temporary effect.

I do not know what I talked about, but the stream seldom abated. It was one way of getting rid of this terrible excess energy which my small parts in the company did not begin to utilize.

Undoubtedly I was preparing myself, unknown to me, for the rapidly approaching moment when all my perplexities would be clarified, all my energies brought into a dazzling focus. That moment came so suddenly and presented itself in such unexpected surroundings that I still marvel at it.

We had reached Buffalo on our way west with the *Dubarry* company. It was a stormy, sleety day, and Buffalo is far from a romantic city. We had ensconced ourselves in the usual drab boardinghouse. My room was a gloomy little hall bedroom with awful red paper on the wall and only space enough for a narrow bed, bureau, and chair. Pat and I escaped from all this as soon as we could and went to a drugstore to get a soda. We were laughing as usual over some joke, and sipping our sodas, when my eyes lifted above the fountain and I saw a cigarette poster of Egyptian Deities.

THE CAUSE OF IT ALL

MY FIRST ATTEMPT, INSPIRED BY THE POSTER

Photo by H. T. Motoyoshi

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It must have contained a potent magic for me. I stopped with my soda half consumed and stared and stared. Pat at length dragged me away by force but she could not break the spell. We had hardly reached the boardinghouse when I said to her, "Go back and see if you can get that poster from the soda clerk. Here's a dollar if he wants money for it."

I really suffered in the brief interval before she returned with the rolled-up poster in her hand. What if he did not let her have it? I took it breathlessly and hung it on the wall opposite my bed. Then I propped myself up with pillows and stared at it.

I saw a modernized and most un-Egyptian figure of the goddess Isis. She was sitting on a throne, framed by a sort of pylon. At her feet were the waters of the Nile with lotus growing. Her knees were close together; her right hand was on her right thigh, while with the other hand she held a lotus-tipped staff. The coloring was harmonious and the composition pleasing but undistinguished.

It is only from the vantage point of maturity that I can analyze what happened to me. This seated image of Isis, a superficial, commercial drawing for a cigarette company, opened up to me in that moment the whole story that was Egypt.

Here was an external image which stirred into instant consciousness all that latent capacity for wonder, that still and meditative love of beauty which lay at the deepest center of my spirit. In this figure before me was the symbol of the entire nation, culture, and destiny of Egypt. The main concern in the picture was, of course, the figure, its repose, its suggestion of latent power and beauty, constituting to my sharply awakened sensitivity a strange symbol of the complete inner being of man. It was like the white light which contains all the colors, like the apparent stillness which contains all motion. It was, however, not merely a symbol of Egypt, but a universal symbol of all the elements of history and art which may be expressed through the human body.

I cannot put into words the intensity and swiftness of this revelation. Lying on my bed, looking at this strange instrument of fate, I identified myself in a flash with the figure of Isis. She became the expression of all the somber mystery and beauty of Egypt, and I knew that my destiny as a dancer had sprung alive in that moment. I would become a rhythmic and impersonal instrument of spiritual revelation rather than a personal actress of comedy or tragedy. I had never before known such an inward shock of rapture.

Pat said she had to feed me for three days before I showed signs of coming to. I got through my part in *Dubarry* somehow, but clung very close to Pat for fear I should make some blunder with cues or costumes.

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I was literally obsessed, and all time spent away from the poster was a tragic loss.

The image of my dance was becoming clear and well defined. I wanted to become this seated figure who symbolized the whole nation of Egypt. I wanted to tell of the rise and fall of her destinies during the period of a day and a night. The day would show her emerging from the unknown, developing to her zenith at noon when her kings and her priests and her artists brought a nation to its prime, and then declining with alarums and wars and invasions to the time of her death. The night would be given to her concept of immortality and its processes of attainment.

I have no wish to appear more occult and mysterious than necessary, but I did have a strange intuitive understanding, far beyond anything that I consciously knew, of the great power Egypt wielded over our age and culture. I had glimpsed in the history, religion, and art of Egypt the symbol of man's eternal search for the beauty and grandeur of life. The latent, subjective side of my nature had begun to function. Visions, plans, and ideas which I had never before experienced crowded in upon me. The world of antiquity and the Orient with all its rich poetry of the human soul opened up and possessed me.

During these exalted hours Pat was my only confidante. I was afraid others would ridicule me or perhaps steal and mutilate what I knew was a great discovery.

Those fateful three days in Buffalo spun my life around like a top. Not only must I learn how to translate this new conception into movement, but I must also learn how to write about these strange new dances; I must gain some knowledge of painting and sculpture, color and line, some familiarity with archeology; I must amplify my understanding of music and costuming; and master stage direction and, above all, lighting. I suddenly discovered that all I had absorbed from D. B., when I was apparently joking and slumbering my way through the seasons, was now to be turned into rich and wide channels.

The *Dubarry* tour carried us as far as California, but even though we played one-night stands I found time to visit all the libraries I could reach and discover in their books and pictures a corroboration rather than a revelation of these new marvels. By the time we reached San Francisco I had blocked out in detail the various episodes of the dance *Egypta*, which was utterly beyond my financial powers to do at this time.

The first thing I did when I got to San Francisco is probably the last thing I shall do before I go to a better world: I searched out a photographer. I had only five dollars to spend, so I fell into the hands

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of a little Japanese who must have thought I was a very queer fish. In those days right-minded young ladies did not go about in bare feet, and with only a band of silk around their apparently unclothed middles. However he did his work well, and anyone who chooses may see a serious young person, seated on an improvised throne, which was probably the photographer's one chair, with a dark drape thrown over it. She has on a short black Egyptian wig with a little paper lotus flower in front. Around her ankles and arms is the imitation Egyptian jewelry made out of colored beads. She is seated in the same pose as the poster and is looking as stern as a small youthful face can look when obsessed with a grand idea.

The tour closed, and I returned as fast as possible to New York and the family. I knew I had laid the foundations of what was to be my real career. How much I had written Mother about it I do not know, but as always she eagerly awaited my return. Apparently she must have been forewarned, however, because she had left the cramped flat on Fiftieth Street; and when she and Buzz met me at the Grand Central Station she said, "Well, dearie, we've got a surprise for you." We put my many bags into a cab, and drew up before a number in Forty-second Street near Eighth Avenue. The flat proved to be a long, narrow affair with plenty of room in which to work.

I scarcely got my hat off before I told the family to gather around, as I had news for them. I had found my work in life, I announced, and my Egyptian dance was to be the first manifestation.

How they received my announcement I do not remember. Father, who was in New York briefly, probably said to himself, "That child always did take after me, but ■ she doesn't do more with her inventions than I've done with mine she's heading for unhappiness."

Buzz, glad to have Sister home again, probably did not absorb much. He wanted to hear about the Rockies and what California looked like, and did I see any bison on the plains?

Mother was the only one who sensed what was afoot; and while I do not suppose she grasped much of my tumbled description of the life of Egypt that I proposed to dance, yet she felt the intensity of my mood.

After supper, when all the family gossip had been exchanged, Pat, who lived near, came in, and all the plans were gone over again, with Pat supplying grand moral support.

I was not the same Ruthie who had left for California, and they all sensed it. A change had come over my spirit. Pat bewailed the fact that

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I had lost all my humor and had no more time to play. Yet she believed in my vision and helped me every way she could.

I buried myself in the libraries and museums, emerging only for meals and sleep. The next months were full of deep and painful confusions but I held to my purpose without wavering. These must have been dark times for Mother, for Father had no steady work. But she had been infected with my vision, and urged me not to go back to Belasco and leave this thrilling business of opening up new worlds for the dance. She kept boarders, but for a while I had the parlor to rehearse in. At last, since that was our best room, it, too, had to be rented; and our out-of-tune piano was moved into the dark little dining room, where in an incredibly small space I managed to dance.

I was terribly perplexed wondering how *Egypta* would be produced. I knew the expenses would run to two or three thousand dollars, and the limitations of fear began to entangle me.

During these days someone took me down to Coney Island. I was mildly intrigued by the sights and sounds, but my whole attention was not captured until I came to an East Indian village which had been brought over in its entirety by the owners of the Hippodrome. Here, for the first time, I saw snake charmers and holy men and Nautch dancers, and something of the remarkable fascination of India caught hold of me.

When I reached home that evening I had determined to create one or two Nautch dances, in imitation of these whirling skirted damsels, and possibly a Japanese number, a faint echo of Mme. Sadi Yaco. With these I was sure I would find some vaudeville bookings and, with the money earned, produce *Egypta*. I was very happy over my decision, and went the next day to the Astor Library to do a little research in Nautch costumes.

Everything went according to plan for a few days. But when pictures of Nautch dancing girls led me to the Devidassi, who were temple dancers, and they in turn brought me to the temples themselves and the name of Radha, the shifting center of interest began, ever so slightly, to move away from Egypt and toward these strange new mysteries of Hindu religion. Both my imagination and my growing sense of spiritual values felt this stimulus. India held my interest to the same degree that Egypt had. I read everything I could lay my hands on; in the library I called for pictures of Nautch dancers, of temples, of the Himalayas, of the jungles, and saturated myself in this atmosphere.

However, it must be clear that this seeming shift of loyalties involved no basic change. The image of *Egypta* had set into vibration an inward



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state that would inevitably express itself from a certain center and after a certain pattern, and it made no difference what the artistic environment or race culture was that I transmitted through the dance.

I brought a very meager technical equipment to assist me in the expression of these ideas. I say meager equipment only in comparison with the virtuosity of the ballet girl or the acrobatic dancer, but I sensed at that time what I later knew—that any technique is sufficient which adequately expresses and reveals the thought intended by the artist. With this in mind my medium of expression was more than adequate to my needs at that time. I had a naturally supple body, well proportioned, very strong, and extremely responsive to the mind.

My first Indian dance was a jumble of everything I was aware of in Indian art, but with little sense of balance and continuity. Ideas came in a stream and from quite unrelated sources. One morning at breakfast Mother and I planned the scene for the *Cobra* dance with bits of toast and a saltcellar. I thought in terms of scenes and not of technical virtuosity. Mother and I moved our bits of toast about to indicate where the Indian water carrier came in and spoke to the fruit seller, where the merchant's stall was, and where the brass seller squatted to watch the snake charmer's exhibition.

By now, as you will see, I had expanded my plans to include supernumeraries. My intense interest in India had sent me into the byways of New York and I collected a little company, which used to meet in our flat to rehearse two or three times a week. They were of all varieties—Hindus, Moslems, Buddhists. Some were clerks from shops, some were students at Columbia, and one or two were unmistakable ne'er-do-wells. They would sit on the floor and answer in a chorus the questions that I flung at them. One night Father had to separate two combatants in a religious war. I had unwittingly asked a Moslem instead of a Hindu the rituals of a Hindu temple.

When our evenings came to a close and the boys had drummed for me to dance until I was sure the neighbors would pound on the walls, we went off, very loud and gay, into the kitchen, where the boys made great dishes of curry while I perched where I might and continued to harry them with questions.

I was beginning to feel the need of audiences. As I met friends on the street I would ask them to come in and see what I had done. With friends perched on couches and chairs, and Pat presiding over our limited selection of music, I would sit on the floor and go through a strange routine of rhythms and gestures which must have been bewildering and unsatisfactory to their Western eyes. But always something would

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emerge from it. One would say, "I like the little bells in your Nautch dance. Be sure to keep that in," or I would receive a letter the next day from Bob Scully, my dear friend from Somerville, who would write, "Listen, Ruth, whatever you do, keep in those rippling arm movements." Out of my jumbled and confused ideas two dances began to emerge, the *Nautch* and the *Incense*.

But *Radha* was, I sensed, to be the blossom of all these little plantings. I conceived of her as an idol in her temple, who for a brief time was infused with life and danced a message for her devotees. Theologically speaking, this was inaccurate, for *Radha*, although the beloved of *Krishna*, the god of love, was seldom worshiped on her own account; but at no time, then or in the future, have I been sufficiently the scholar or sufficiently interested to imitate or try to reproduce any Oriental ritual or actual dance—the mood to me is all, and inevitably manifests its own pattern. The beautiful symbology of *Radha* fascinated me. She was the human soul, forever seeking union with the divine, which was *Krishna*, and the various poems and legends of *Radha* showed her sometimes in great ecstasy standing on the same lotus with her beloved and at other times wandering in a night of doubt and pride, far off from him.

It must be remembered that my creative instincts were and at the same time were not those of the dancer. To be sure, in those days I was unconsciously obeying an inward impulse and did not stop to analyze or separate my actions. But without any question I was at that time a kind of dancing ritualist. The intensities of my spiritual life had found a focus of action in exactly the same way that another earnest young person would enter the church. I longed to translate into rhythmic patterns a spiritual significance. This had not been done, so far as I know, in the Western world; nor was it expressed in the dogma of the Eastern dances. For there is a vast and psychological difference between a dancer, moving on an altar before the image of his god in propitiation or sacrifice or praise, and the embodiment by the dancer of the elements which he conceives to belong to the godhead.

I found it very difficult to find the music which would express these qualities. In those days musicians were not looking to the dance for inspiration. So I was forced to choose from the limited supply at hand. Several friends had made suggestions, but nothing came of them. The pieces were either too commonplace or too westernized. One day, when this obstacle was looming very large, Pat burst in, calling, "Densie, darling, I've found your music." Under her arm she had a score of *Lakmé*. She went at once to the piano, and my enraptured ears heard

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that wonderful overture which established the keynote for the temple. *Radha* had found her music.

We used all of the ballet music, the overture, and one or two of the lesser known arias. What remained from the ballet numbers we pressed into service for the *Cobra*. This fragment was a wheezy little air, which when played on the oboe gave a throbbing and elusive rhythm to the snake charmer.

The *Incense* was not finished yet, but I had met Harvey Worthington Loomis, the composer, and heard one of his haunting little pieces, and I knew it belonged to the dance. He seemed pleased at my appreciation, and dedicated the little piece to the *Incense*.

My whole life revolved around my work at this period, but Pat and I snatched an evening off to enter briefly into another world. Bernhardt was advertised to appear at Hammerstein's Victoria in that old melodrama, *The Sorcerer*, and Pat and I spent our last fifty cents in the top gallery. I remember, looking down as the first act proceeded and, watching this incredible being moving through the part, saying to Pat, "Put your fingers in your ears so that you can't hear her, and you will see that she is dancing."

I feel that my picturesque posings on the stage, sometimes artificial and sometimes legitimate, stem from watching this performance of Bernhardt.

I had very few friends at that time. The only people who interested me were those who could feed my insatiable longing for the color and knowledge of India.

About this time I met Jal Bhumgara, whose father was a charming Parsee merchant with a store filled with enchanting silks and jewels and rugs. The family were very kind, and extremely helpful when they realized that I was approaching my temple dance in a spirit of great reverence. They allowed me to spend as much time as I wanted in the store, handling their treasures and asking them questions.

We were all thrown into a state of great excitement when we heard that the great ruler, the Gaekwar of Baroda and his beautiful wife, the Rani, were on their way to New York. The Bhumgaras were to give them a reception, to which all the elite of the Indian colony were to be invited. The Bhumgaras asked me to dance. I was tremendously excited, for the Gaekwar would give me a glimpse of the color and splendor of India which up to now had been only dubiously supplied by my devoted but humble boys. I arranged to give a dance which was not yet finished, but which would emerge as the *Incense*.

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The Bhungaras store was turned into a vast drawing room with the hangings and merchandise to give it color. A little platform was built, on which were seated the Gaekwar and the Rani. I was in a state of great tension, but I had so identified myself with the worshiper I portrayed that the dance went off without too much agitation on my part. The Rani was especially gracious afterwards, telling me that I looked and acted like a high-class Indian woman.

This evening was to have reverberations many years later in Bombay.

The Bhungaras, by way of rewarding me for my small efforts, offered me anything I wanted from their priceless store of Indian materials, and to their consternation and amusement I chose some old embroidered kutch work of russet brown with little mirrors set into the material. I also selected some long brown material for my turban and in this way clothed myself for my cobra dance.

Edmund Russell was brought to our flat during this period of Indian saturation. He was a strange old-young man who my irreverent Buzz said had been dead for ten years and did not know it. Tall and distinguished-looking, he had curious blue eyes which went straight through one without any sign of recognition. He was an aesthete, surrounded always by beautiful young men, and he somehow managed to live on nothing a year. He gave extraordinary and famous parties, and a pet joke was that the black mammy who had been with him for years was sometimes draped in a sari on these occasions and pressed into service as an Indian ayah.

He became much intrigued by my interest in Indian philosophy and art. From that moment he stimulated and helped me without measure. He told me what books to read; he told me where I would find Indian jewelry and carvings in the Metropolitan Museum. He took me one night to Arra Char, the Barrett mansion on Staten Island, where he gave a reading of *The Light of Asia*.

The Barrett mansion was presided over by two extraordinary women, Mrs. Beauley and Mrs. Bryan. Mrs. Beauley had performed a great service to the dance by her translation of *The Antique Greek Dance* by Emanuel, an invaluable key to the understanding of movement. They were vague, arty women, impecunious, but with a flair for strange and often entertaining people, and on this occasion they had captured Edmund as the lion of their evening. He made a deep impression on me as he stood on the platform, dressed in a rich Indian turban and a long rajah coat, flanked by two tall candlesticks. The rest of the room was in darkness, and he made an arresting figure as he read in his modulated, beautiful voice from sheets of paper instead of a book. As he

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finished a page he let fall these sheets, so that at the end the floor in front of him was covered with white leaves.

Edmund believed in my early success. He urged me to complete *Radha* quickly, for he felt that this new conception of the dance would make its rightful place once it was seen. All my time, my thoughts, my resources went toward this goal. And *Radha* was not bound up in fear, as *Egypta* had been. Money came sometimes in the most extraordinary ways. First of all, Father got a job, the first he had had for more than a year. He must, in his own curious way, have believed in my idea, for he asked his employer to lend him a hundred dollars for me. Then Pat met a remarkable woman named Kate Dalliba and she invited me to dance for fifty dollars in her black and gold salon.

Kate Dalliba had the kind of salon that we associate with the old days of France, but rarely with American society. Writers and painters, but mostly musicians came to her lovely apartment. She was wholeheartedly devoted to music, but I believe I was the only dancer she befriended. Her daughter, Gerda, was a talented, undisciplined child who attracted her own circle, and their combined supper parties made an essential and fruitful place of meeting.

I gave here what was really my first presentation of *The Dance of the Five Senses*, but without the temple and priests. I sat cross-legged on a table which was draped with Indian material.

When it was over, Mrs. Dalliba rushed up to me and said, "Dear Child, you must have your temple for this dance. I'm not a rich woman, but I am going to give you two hundred dollars toward it."

Where the final money came from I do not remember. During that winter the pressure of the landlord and the butcher and the baker, who knew nothing about talented daughters, inventive fathers, and devoted mothers, forced me to find a temporary job. I went one bright morning in a little red hat to sing for the stage manager of a musical comedy called *Woodland*. I suspect that it was the red hat and not the voice that got me the job, but I was turned into a glorious peacock in the chorus for twenty-five dollars a week. This lasted for some time, but when the company went on tour another test of faith followed. Would I dare give up my job? Here my wonderful mother, as always, was strength where strength was needed. The whole family believed in what I was trying to do, and we managed to squeeze in another roomer.

This was a period of terrible strain for all of us. My costume of course had been made, but I needed scenery to impress a manager. A kind stableman allowed me to store some of my props with him, and I went down there day after day to put gold paint on the lotus pedestal

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on which Radha sat. But money had to be raised to build the temple interior, and my Hindus had to be trained to a fine professional point.

At this period of eager hopes one minute and utter despair the next I had a call from the Belasco office to fill a temporary engagement. Ordinarily I would have been delighted, but it meant leaving New York with the whole business of *Radha* lying about my mental landscape, uncompleted. At that very period of indecision a letter came from my mother's dearest friend, the Countess de Lachau, inclosing the last twenty dollars that she possessed at the time, and saying in her little note, "Hold on to your faith. Do not give up. Go straight ahead."



**CHAPTER V: A Goddess Meets a King:** THIS little note determined me. I had the scene set up and the inevitable pictures taken, and then for six months I peddled them up and down Broadway to the agents' and managers' offices. But none of them would give me a chance. I think they regarded me as slightly demented, one of those fanatical people who have a "million-in-it" look in their eyes.

At the end of this terrible strain—and we were literally living from hand to mouth—we found one agent who said that I could show my "act," as it was disrespectfully called, at Keith's Theater on Fourteenth Street. Now this sounded like something very good, but it would cost fifty dollars to haul the scene and the properties to and from storage, and bring the costumes from the flat in the taxi. Where Mother found this money I do not know, but I do know that it was the last she was able to obtain.

The morning arrived. We were scheduled to be at the theater by eleven o'clock. The set and the Hindus arrived, and the stagehands, with raised eyebrows and much chuckling comment, showed the Hindus to their dressing room and took a look at my weird properties. They had put up plenty of Oriental trapeze acts before, but never one like this!

It always took me a long time to make my body brown and put on the jeweled costume, but at last everything was ready. Buzz had arranged the lights and Pat, as usual, was in the pit at the piano. Of course we knew that the house would be dark, but supposed with implicit faith that the manager would be in front.

The scene lasted seventeen minutes, during which time I became the goddess with all the fervor at my command. The curtain descended on the final picture of the goddess back again on her throne. We returned to the dressing room with a tense feeling of uncertainty and sent Buzz out for the verdict. He came back with a long face, and it took him a minute or two to say, "There's nobody in front but the scrubwoman mopping up the aisle, and she says there hasn't been a soul here all morning."

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We could not speak. There was nothing to do but get dressed, give a pitiful little tip to the stage carpenter, who openly showed his disapproval of the whole outfit, and take ourselves home. As there was not enough room in the taxi for all our bundles, Buzz and I rode home on the truck.

That night at supper we sat around in that darkest hour before dawn when one wonders if things have come to an end. The agent had been so sure something would come from the trial that we had staked everything we had on this last throw, and now the next day had to be faced with less than two dollars in the house.

In the middle of our desperate supper a tap came at the door and there stood a strange little figure, a friend of Mother called Mrs. Barrett. Mother had met her at church on Eighth Avenue. This dear old creature, apparently without a friend in the world and with never more than a nickel in her pocket, was always full of sweetness and cheer because, as she said, Jesus looked after her.

She was like something out of a Dickens' novel, with a fearful and wonderful bonnet which sat on the back of her head exposing her round, cheery face. Jesus apparently fed her well, for she was fat and dumpy, and her clothes clung to her as though she were one of the overstuffed pincushions one buys at a bazaar. She carried a huge sack in her hand, which I presume held all her earthly possessions. Thus she stood, smiling at us.

She had arrived opportunely for supper and so we made a place for her at the table. But bless her old heart, she soon saw that in this otherwise animated family something had gone wrong. The gloom was unmistakable. Poor little Buzz looked as distressed as Mother, and bent over his plate in that funny tight-lipped way he has when he is inwardly moved.

Mother did not eat much and sat silently with her head against her hand. Finally Mrs. Barrett said, "Well, children, what seems to be the matter? You know God hasn't gone visitin'." So Mother unburdened herself of the day's disaster and wound up by saying, "We just don't know what we're going to do."

"Well," said Mrs. Barrett, "let's get the Bible." I ran and fetched it and she gave it to Mother, saying, "Turn to the third chapter of Habakkuk, the seventeenth verse, and you will find your answer."

Mother read: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herds in the stalls:

"Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.





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" 'The Lord God ■ my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.' "

I think we all wept a little, for the awful tension was broken. It was the pivotal hour of my entire career. What funny clothes angels sometimes wear!

The next day we came to the conclusion that the established order of things would have none of me, and that somehow I must produce myself.

Why I went to Henry B. Harris at the Hudson Theater ■ ask him the rent of it for an afternoon, I do not know. But I can still see him, sitting behind his desk, a handsome man with kindly eyes and great poise, listening to the strange story of a mother and daughter who obviously did not belong to the Broadway with which he was so familiar.

We showed him the pictures and described as best we could this dance that we wanted to put on in his theater. But like a cautious man he insisted on seeing it before making any rash promises.

This time the set was put up by his own stagehands and the whole atmosphere was one of great helpfulness, for his men had a deep affection for their Henry B. and did what he asked with cheerfulness and efficiency.

With one or two members of his staff he sat in front during those fateful seventeen minutes. At the end of that time he came back to my dressing room immediately and, holding out his hands, said, "My dear child, this is a beautiful thing and must be seen."

After all these months this was our first ray of hope. It also marked the beginning of a long and devoted association, for Harris remained my manager and good friend until the day of his death on the *Titanic*. He was a rare person to find in the atmosphere of Broadway, and my memories of him are all affectionate and grateful.

He thought our problem could be solved by giving a complete performance of *Radha* for the vaudeville managers of New York. He agreed to undergo the expense of hauling and lighting and stagehands, and would personally invite these managers to come. Since it was Henry B. Harris who asked them, they appeared.

They strolled in, one after the other, laughing and joking among themselves, patting their expanding waistcoats, and smoking their inevitable cigars. After the lights went down, I do not know what expressions passed over their faces as they saw *Radha* go through the mysteries of the Hindu ritual. But at the fall of the curtain there was silence and they all filed out into the lobby and stood around in a ring.

Percy Williams said, "You know, Hammerstein, this would be just

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the thing for your theater." And Hammerstein recommended it, quite as heartily, to someone else. In the end, they all said reluctantly ■ Harris, "This kind of thing might go in Paris, but frankly it will never do for New York."

How Harris broke the news to the Dennis family I do not know, but a sense of humor supported us and we all laughed, though again with a sinking feeling that we were once more facing a blind alley. But no, we soon made an ironic discovery. In that group had been a manager named Louis F. Werber, who ran the New York Theater, which gave Sunday Night Smoking Concerts! And, prepare to weep, one of his "turns" had disappointed him and he said to Harris, "If you like, I'll give that Hindu dancing act a spot in next Sunday's performance."

All questions of pride, the fitness of things, prestige, went completely by the board. Here was a plain, unvarnished job, and a little Hindu goddess could not stand in its way. But it took some fortitude to expose the little goddess ■ that Sunday-night, rollicking crowd. The air was filled with tobacco smoke. It was principally a men's audience, and I imagine that many of the turns that followed me were concerned with ribaldry and not art, for when the curtains rose and one of the Hindus entered the temple bearing an incense tray on his upturned palm it was too much for this audience and one of them, in a rich Negro dialect, called out, "Who wants de Waitah?" They roared at this and I could see my Hindu priests stiffening under this ridicule.

I sat there in my blue light wondering what was going to happen. But when I began to move and took up the long garland of marigolds that I handled in my first dance of Sight, they grew quiet, and by the time the full rippling skirt had gotten into action they were considerably intrigued and gave quite a round of applause when the curtain fell—although I am sure there was much shrugging of shoulders and wondering what Werber was coming to to give them this kind of fare, especially on a Sunday night.

However, I was engaged the next Sunday evening as well, and in the interval my artistic sensibilities were restored by two invitations to dance at private entertainments, one from Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish—how my introduction came, I do not remember—and the other from Rowland Hinton Perry, the sculptor. I remember very little of the evening at Mrs. Fish's. It was excessively elegant and well bred, and the audience was appreciative of the Hindu dances which the papers persisted in reporting as American Indian dances.

Perry was an acquaintance of Kate Dalliba, and had a large studio at 51 West Tenth Street. Here I found people who understood the lan-

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guage of art and were warmly responsive to *Radha*. The Oliver Herfords were there, and Cleveland Moffett. I do not remember the others.

These little forays caused some newspaper comment, most of which had to do with "one of the most sensational dances ever seen in New York, done by an exotic barefoot dancer from the Himalayas of New Jersey," but the Broadway managers were unimpressed. However, during that week an offer came from Proctor's Twenty-third Street Theater.

At Proctor's a certain turn of events occurred which was really the beginning of success. My act went on between Bob Fitzsimmons, the pugilist, and a group of trained monkeys. The engagement was extended to several weeks, but for a while my most ardent supporter was the fireman backstage. He was strong for *Radha* and used to stand in the wings and watch my "delirium of the senses" with enraptured eyes. He did a hundred small things to make life a little more comfortable in a situation where acrobats and monkeys and pugilists made it difficult to maintain a Nirvanic calm.

Gradually, however, I felt a slow response from the audience. From suspicion they graduated to varying stages of appreciation. Caroline and Charles Caffin say of this Proctor engagement in their *Dancing and Dancers Today*\*:

The vaudeville audience as a whole did not comprehend her aspirations. At first there was a distinct gasp of amazement, wonderment whether to disapprove of the audacity or to resent the lofty conception. But in each audience were a few who responded unreservedly to the beauty of the appeal and went out and told others of the rare vision they had seen. These, in turn, spread the good news, until the manager was surprised to find at each performance a stream of people of a type not usually seen at a vaudeville performance, who came just before *Radha's* appearance and hurried away as soon as her curtain fell, and who came again and yet again. Truly the people who came and saw and were conquered were a cause of some surprise to others than the manager.

The American public is very prudish. Yet here a beautiful body was displayed with no casings to interrupt the play of light on the bronze skin or hide the play of muscles of the lithe limbs. But the crystal purity of the dancer's intent seemed to have reflected itself in the minds of her audience and banished every thought of prejudice.

During these weeks in the sordid, superficial atmosphere of Proctor's Theater, we were grateful for the little money we were earning, yet our spirits were low. Where was all this going to bring us?

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At the lowest point in our dejection came one of those many evidences of the projection of Divine Love which has so signally characterized my entire life.

To my dressing room after a matinee came a lady who asked if she might speak to me alone. Obviously a woman of culture, there was a gleam of determination in her eye. She introduced herself as Mrs. Orlando Rouland, the wife of the well-known painter. She said that she had been some six or eight times to see the performance and had brought innumerable friends, but every time she had to sit through the trained monkeys she felt she could not endure it and at last had taken her courage in her hands and come back to tell me of an idea which had grown as a solution of the problem.

It did not take me long to discover that she was an unselfish, enthusiastic woman who had been an encouragement and help to others besides myself.

"You know you don't belong in this dreadful environment," she said.

"Yes," I answered, "Mother and I know that, too, but what can be done about it?"

She replied, "If I arrange a matinee for you at a proper uptown theater, will you give your services at the first performance on the chance that the subsequent ones will pay much better than anything you're getting here?"

The idea was wonderful. We told her about Harris. She immediately went to him and he rented her the theater at a very nominal sum. She planned to get twenty-five women of her acquaintance, some of whom had seen the performance, to give twenty-five dollars apiece to defray the expenses, and for this they were to be allowed to invite a number of their friends to fill the house. The success of the future lay in their hands.

Mrs. Rouland sent out this announcement:

The following ladies, appreciating the beauty of the Oriental dance of *Radha*, will unite in giving a matinee for the pleasure of their friends at the Hudson Theatre on Thursday afternoon, March 22nd, at half past three o'clock: Mrs. William Allen, Mrs. Karl Bitter, Mrs. Edwin H. Blashfield, Mrs. Francke H. Bosworth, Mrs. Arthur Davies, Mrs. Harry Harkness Flagler, Mrs. Paul Leicester Ford, Mrs. Richard Watson Gilder, Mrs. Ben Ali Haggin, Mrs. Henry W. Jardon, Mme. Imanishi, Mrs. Adrian H. Joline, Mrs. Otto H. Kahn, Mrs. George A. Meyer, Mrs. Howard Mansfield, Mrs. Richard Mansfield, Mrs. George L. Nichols, Mrs. Eliot Norton, Mrs. Orlando Rouland, Mrs. Philip Conway Sawyer, Mrs. Howard Taylor, Mrs. Alexander Tison, Mrs. James M. Townsend, Mrs. Allen Tucker, Mrs. J.

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Alden Weir, Mrs. Charles C. Worthington. Tea will be served in the foyer at five o'clock.


This announcement created a great deal of interest. The names of the patronesses meant attention in the newspapers. I was interviewed tirelessly; and far from understanding what I represented, the stories built up a highly charged picture of a voluptuous young woman who was to dance a "delirium of the senses." The *New York Sun*, attempting to give me more sympathy, quoted an interview, "'There is nothing new in evil,' explains a pale transcendental young woman, 'therefore to be original you must choose the good'"; but on the whole the matinee was treated as a "sensation, designed to appeal to the love of the voluptuous, the sensuous and the mysticism in women." All men, according to the printed rumor, were to be sternly barred from the first performance, and the dancer was to wear scarcely more than a gauze skirt.

We were much too busy to pay any attention to this kind of publicity. We were rehearsing, preparing costumes, packing properties for the theater. While tagging our innumerable bundles, Mother suddenly looked up, a pencil poised in her hand, and said, "Ruthie, I don't know just what to put on these tags. Up until now we've called you Radha. But as you're going to do other things, I think you ought to use your own name. After all, you are an American dancer, and not an East Indian. What was it that Belasco used to call you? Wasn't it Saint Denis?"

"Yes," I said, and Mother wrote it on the tag, and thus casually my new name came into being.

When the day of the matinee arrived I tried to set a tone for the performance, knowing how important it was to create the right atmosphere for *Radha*. The Hudson Theater had a long and charming foyer, which meant that when one finally reached the orchestra seats the street was left far behind. Mr. Bhungara and some of my Hindu friends stood with Mrs. Rouland in the foyer and welcomed the guests, and incense was burning in the auditorium so as to create the atmosphere of a temple. I put some suggestion of costumes on the ushers and instructed them to move quietly so as to keep a soft rhythm from the beginning.

The place was crowded when the curtain parted on the *Incense* music. Cashmere shawls were hung at the back of the stage. Long spirals of incense rose from two great burners near the footlights. Presently an Indian woman slipped through the shawls to pay puja to her gods. Dressed in a soft smoke-gray sari, she bore a tray of incense in



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her hands. She advanced with slow, hesitant step. As she came, presumably to some image of her god, she raised her tray of incense and the lovely, trembling smoke rose higher and higher. Then she laid down the tray, and with her rippling arms she became the very spirit of the smoke. At last her arms came slowly to rest by her side; she took up her tray again and, making a low obeisance, went with long, undulating steps to the right-hand burner. Her puja finished, she slipped through the shawls once more.

The rising smoke of the incense was to me a symbol of devotion, of prayer and meditation, of the surrender of self and the ecstasy of release, and I attempted to say with my rippling arms and my whole body what I felt in my heart.

There was a moment of silence when the dance was over, and then the applause broke forth.

The *Cobra* was the second dance on the program. The backdrop showed the street of an Indian bazaar. My erstwhile Hindu sailors and students and ne'er-do-wells had been transformed into actors. They were enjoying themselves hugely, wearing wonderfully colored turbans and other accouterments of merchants and street hawkers. There were only five or six of them but, having the Belasco tradition in my blood, I managed to make them look a crowd.

At the opening of the curtain there was much chatter by the Hindus, shrilly advertising their wares and bantering jokes among themselves. Presently the first notes of the snake charmer's music were heard, and from the upper left-hand corner appeared his ragged figure. A scraggly wig fell over my eyes; a filthy turban was wrapped slackly around my head and hung like a limp snake down my back. On the first and last fingers of each hand were green rings. They had been backed by tin foil which, at a distance, gave a baleful and sinister glitter to my hands, no matter which way they moved.

I entered the scene with my arms, as the snakes, wrapped around my neck. During the scene the other merchants watched me with a casual eye and threw a word of encouragement if my snakes did not appear to behave. The dance itself was very short, consisting of a pantomime with the arms. I took my cobras from around my neck and made them dance to the tune of a snake charmer's flute, allowing them to crawl all around my body, over my head and about the platform on which I was sitting. When, with a hiss, they struck, the dance was over. The cotton merchant and the brass seller took up their interrupted argument and the curtains closed.



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But the imagination of the public had been caught. As Ted Shawn said in *Pioneer and Prophet*:

*The Cobras* lent themselves not only to imitators but also to cartoons. Hardly a cartoonist in America or Europe but had a try at it. *The Cobras* were also painted and sculptured many times, the painting by Orlando Rouland and the bronze by Gaston Lechaise standing foremost.

There was another wait, longer than the preceding one, but even more patiently borne, before *Radha* was given.

When the curtain went up a vast temple was shown, incrustated with gold and dim with smoke. On the ground in meditation were the squatting forms of devotees. The wailing music rose as they prostrated themselves before the shrine. Presently, through the incense smoke, the doors of the shrine were seen to open and the impassive form of the goddess was revealed. After a short interval *Radha* descended from her pedestal and signified to her worshipers that she had taken this human form in order to give them a message. This she would convey through a mystic dance, the meaning of which was that they must not seek permanent happiness in an impermanent world.

The dance was comprised of three figures, the first being performed in five circles, one within the other, each circle representing one of the five senses. The senses were symbolized by different objects: jewels for sight, bells for hearing, garlands for smell, a bowl of wine for taste, and, for touch, kisses on her own hands.

The second figure was danced on a square, representing, according to Buddhist theology, the fourfold miseries of life, and was done with writhings and twistings of the body to portray the despair of unfulfillment. At the end of this figure *Radha* sank to the ground in darkness.

After a short interval a light disclosed her in an attitude of prayer and meditation. She now rose and, holding a lotus flower, began the third figure of the dance, which followed the lines of an open lotus flower—the steps leading from the center of the flower to the points of each petal. She danced on the balls of her feet, thus typifying the ecstasy and joy which follow renunciation of the senses and freedom from their illusion. At the close of this figure, which finished the message, *Radha* slowly danced backward to the shrine, followed by the priests, and the doors of her shrine were closed.

When the curtain fell on this memorable matinee there was at first unbroken silence for a few seconds. During this silence, I imagine, a small portion of the audience was genuinely moved by the artistic solemnity and beauty of the scene and instinctively felt that applause

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was out of order, but I can well imagine that the rest of the audience was covertly glancing about at its neighbors to see what they were doing, being quite well aware that they were in a theater and not a temple, and yet unwilling to break a spell. Presently applause did break out, and lasted for several minutes. Obviously the silence was more dear to me than any amount of applause.

As this invited audience filed out, Harris, listening to their comments and feeling the temper of the occasion, knew that we had a great success, a success based upon something which would evade and intrigue audiences for twenty-five years.

The critical reception broke the next day. To the *New York Telegraph* the dances were nothing more or less than a wow! A "mixture of hoochee-koochee and cake walk. She wrapped herself in volumes of incense and at a loud thump from the bass drum sank ker-flop. All the women cried 'Splendid!' and a few men said 'Oh, splash!'" A little colloquy between an unknown lady in black velvet and Mrs. Howard Mansfield was overheard and reported. "I think that last dance was simply indecent," said the lady. "She didn't have a thing on but that monkey jacket and skirt." To which Mrs. Mansfield answered, "I can only repeat the reply to the person who thought the Venus de Medici indecent. 'I think the remark far more indecent than the statue.'" To the lovers of the flesh, the expanse of brown skin was the main concern, mingled with a manful attempt to give it license on an artistic basis.

It was the Hindu Temple dance that fulfilled all expectations, artistic and—and otherwise. What matter if the baser minds put their programmes before their eyes and announced that the brown legs of the dancer blended into the tints above the ankles too realistically for the legs to be clad in tights. What matter if the movements of the torso below the short jacket divulged every undulation of the flesh? It was all quite as much as the most daring had anticipated. It was all art—Art unshed and unadorned.

To compensate for the voices of these philistines was a tiny handful of responsive souls who managed to bridge the gap into this new art of the theater which had not allowed itself to be classified. To John Corbin, for instance, and a few other commentators this new articulation presented no difficulties.

The Hindu dances of Miss Ruth St. Denis [said Corbin] are like the songs of Mendelssohn, without words; and they thus present the fine art of dancing at its purest, which is to say, its absolute form. The general effect is as

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large and exalted as it is plastically graceful and free. The spirit of a ritual is preserved throughout in all reverence.

And to Ben Teale the dance presented the question:

What will the new dance be? . . . This sort of dancing—the new sort, I mean—appeals to the higher senses and makes you think. It interprets beautiful things and can be as expressive as music or poetry.

Since Mr. Teale was the general stage manager of all Charles Frohman's musical comedies his next statement indicated an astute recognition of the currents that had been set moving.

In all of the musical productions that I am to make for the coming season, I am trying to approach this in my dances, which will be more postures and pictures than actual dancing, as we understand it. I am sure that the next season or two will show an entire change in the manner of dancing as introduced into musical pieces.

How good a prophet Mr. Teale was is evidenced by the complete penetration into all forms of musical comedy by some phase of the creative period begun at this time.

The outward expression of success began with this performance at the Hudson Theater. But all that happened in the subsequent years ■ of less importance than the fact that I have never solved the spiritual problem where to perform these dances.

Neither *Radha* nor any of the other temple dances belonged in the theater. I was dimly aware of this when I tried to invoke an atmosphere of worship through the incense burned before the performance; I knew it with increasing clarity when I found my audiences always responding with silence to these dances. Intuitively I tried to restate man's primitive use of the dance as an instrument of worship, and the result was a profound evolution in myself but no answer to the question, What temple will receive these dances?

I have always been an itinerant preacher, a sort of artistic circuit rider with no fixed place to lay my head. The fault must lie in myself, and my purpose in writing this autobiography is to try to find out where the trouble lurks.

The whole Christian world has been greatly concerned, in the last seventy years, with physical healing by spiritual means. Mary Baker Eddy sounded the first great popular call to arms, and the influence of her message and the success of the Christian Science Church confirms the need for this development in our spiritual life. This ■ as it should be. Health of mind and body precedes, in the line of complete

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realization, every other development. But I have maintained for many years that the next plane of demonstration should be in the arts, and to this neither the traditional church in any of its sects, nor the modern metaphysical church has applied itself. The discipline of spiritual consciousness is the only force that can enlarge the artist's capacities and free him from his own temperamental limitations. I have tried to dance my spiritual awareness, but alas, the human too often thwarted my ideals.

Art is either the great idolatry or the great inspiration of mankind. The typical egocentric genius is absorbed and obsessed by what he considers his own creation, and my spiritual sins have been less forgivable than many another because I have always sensed this distinction, and when for any length of time I have been driven by the furies of pride and greed I have invariably come to some climax of action which has vividly shown me the unrighteousness of my egotism.

I remember sadly the second night that I played the New York Theater Roof. We needed money desperately, but when I came to the theater that Sunday morning to unpack and noticed that the billboard outside the theater had put a certain jockey named Tod Sloan at the top of the *affiche*, while my name was at the bottom, I raged and stormed. In my hysterics of self-pity poor Mother could only stand by and wait for the storm to subside. I was in no position to force a change in billing and all I succeeded in doing was inflame my ego to a painful point. But that night, when at last the flat was quiet and I was reading in my bed, I began to realize what had happened. My ungrateful, egocentric, proud self had obsessed me. And the only good that emerged from it was that through intense suffering I was brought back to wonderment and mortification. In my eyes these flights of the ego have always been sin. And yet in my experience there has been little grappling with or understanding of the artist temperament by those very forces of righteousness, the Church, which should be a stronghold and illumination to those who are struggling in the net of their own natures.

Perhaps the reasons are not obscure. Pains of the body we are eager to relinquish and we will submit to discipline in order to be healed, but the mental diseases and immoralities of the artistic consciousness are a strange country to which few healers have ever been sent.

It is exactly at this point that my life has any real value. I have suffered the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune and I have inherited my due share of the daughters of the earth. But with this common heritage of women in all their limitations, there was given to me

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at the beginning a passion for that larger life which I am only now beginning to realize.

Though I have remained devoted, with a daily and constant fidelity, to the Bible and all of its development in modern thought, I became at once a citizen of another realm when I first began my research into the vast wisdom of the East. And yet even with my expanding concept of life I did not escape periods of horrible depression when the delightful and awful phantasmagoria of my career was living out its hectic hours. Where, for instance, was I, the immortal and essential Me, when the Ruthie Dennis, canonized by David Belasco into an undeserved sainthood, was dancing her way around the world?

One's whole career, in retrospect, seems only a great first act to an incompleated drama of the soul.

Following this matinee, eight or ten others were immediately announced, four of them a week, and to Harris' immense pride and satisfaction the intelligentsia of New York came flocking. The word had spread that something most unusual was occurring at the Hudson Theater. However, this support, though enthusiastic, was small, and when Henry B. had to go to Europe on business of his own the matinees came to an end.

A few special performances followed. The famous Lewisohn sisters, Irene and Alice, were two of my most generous and stimulating patrons, as they have been to many another artist in his long upward path. They had not only come to the Hudson matinees, but they asked me to give an evening at their lovely apartment on Fifth Avenue, and paid me well for it when I was so desperately in need of cash, the matinees having been more of a financial drain than a remuneration. Mrs. Herbert Satterlee, the sister of J. P. Morgan, also asked me to dance at her Thursday Evening Club.

Mrs. Jack Gardner sent for me to come to Boston for a benefit performance, at her famous Fenway Court home. Here all the social and intellectual figures of Boston came. Mrs. Gardner was a striking individual, enveloped in black, with a heavy mesh veil over her head. The occasion passed off very well save for one difficult moment when Mrs. Gardner, who was a strong-willed lady, and I, another, met over the question of tacks in her beautiful inlaid floor.

I could not dance without a floor cloth and the floor cloth demanded tacks. She declared they could not be driven into this floor, and for a moment it looked as though Mrs. Gardner would triumph. But Mother appeared on the scene and, motioning me to betake myself to the dress-

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ing room, undertook to explain in dangerously suave tones that the floor cloth would have to go down or her large and distinguished audience would have no dancer to entertain them. I am sure Mrs. Gardner never forgave me, but the evening was a huge success in spite of this contretemps.

Immediately afterwards I went to Washington at the invitation of that remarkable and delightful individual, Mrs. Alice Barney, to appear for another charity. The diplomatic group and the president's daughter, Mrs. Nicholas Longworth, were there. Mrs. Barney was an eccentric, talented individual with butterscotch-colored hair which flew in all directions, and an extraordinary taste in clothes. She had a flair for assisting artists and giving original parties. Her organizing capacities were amazing; at parties she managed to be in four rooms at once, seeing to everything, reaching over four or five heads to say hello to someone she had not seen for twenty years and yet recognized immediately.

Back in New York, Wilhelm Funk, the portrait painter, gave me an evening of dancing in his studio, and The MacDowell Club and The National Arts Club invited me to dance. I also had the joy of appearing in a concert with that mellow and delightful artist, Henry Burleigh, the great Negro singer who was the soloist of St. George's Church in Stuyvesant Square. He sang a number of his own compositions and I danced the *Incense*.

I was feeling the full flush and excitement of success. The days of Brooklyn and of London and *Zaza* seemed very remote. The People's Symphony Orchestra was giving a concert at the Waldorf-Astoria and I was dancing. I had no idea that Stanford White was in the city. I had noticed his wife's name among the patronesses of the concert, but I had never met her. The final curtain had fallen on *Radha* and I was going down two or three little steps that led backstage when a pair of dark velvet curtains were thrown apart and Stanford White appeared. All he said was, "Oh, Ruth, how glad I am!" I ran to him, and in spite of my brown make-up he held me closely for a minute and repeated over and over, "How glad I am you did it at last." He looked at me with such pride that my heart glowed. One of his many young pensioners had done something of which he could be proud.

He had slipped back from his wife's box and could not linger. We parted reluctantly with a little tightness in the throat. "Good night, Stanford," I said, "good night, good night." And that was the last I ever saw him, the man who had summed up my romantic, worshipful ideal.

By this time a cable had come from Henry B. which threw the

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family into a great state of excitement. In London he had arranged with Charles Frohman to present me at three matinees at the Aldwych Theater and we were to sail in two weeks.

Before I sailed I was scheduled to dance at a charity performance for which an auditorium in the Presbyterian Building had been engaged. The Presbyterian powers were quite disarmed by the good name of charity, and did not think to inquire into the dance to be displayed within their austere walls. But some busy-doer soon reported that Radha wore nothing between her jacket and her skirt. Consternation in all camps raged for several days. The gentleman in charge of the Presbyterian Building declined to see the dance of *Radha*, maintaining that one look at a photograph was enough. *Radha's* torso was bare for four inches, and the Presbyterian Building could not sanction any such display. My sailing date came before a new hall could be arranged.

Those last few days in New York were the first taste of a new adventure. Mother's days stretched from one dawn to the next. She had to keep the flat running, see that the costumes and properties were finished and paid for, try to turn Buzz into an efficient accountant, which I am sure even he will admit was quite a task, and reconcile Father who stood on the side lines, partly happy and partly disgruntled at the rapid changes in our lives. Pat was in and out continually, very excited to be going with us.

Mother and Pat and I sailed with great fanfare from Father and Buzz who were to follow in a few days, Buzz to remain as Mother's helper with both accounts and stage managing, and Father to visit his old home at Stourbridge and then return to New York.

After an uneventful voyage we arrived at a boardinghouse in Gower Street, a dreary place, for a strange fact has always dogged my steps: no matter how famous I may be, my impecuniousness can always be relied upon. We had dinner that night in the traditional, stuffy boardinghouse dining room, our landlady, in fringe and black jet, presiding majestically at the head of the table. A few somber boarders sat about stiffly and tried to look content with the meager fare. I remember dessert was offered on the terms of whether we would have cheese or marmalade. As soon as we escaped from this groaning dinner, Mother tied her little bonnet strings firmly and said with a twinkle in her eye, "Well, children, let us go now and get something to eat."

While still in New York I had danced one evening for a very charming man, Dr. Holbrook Curtis, and told him that I was going to London. He promptly gave me a letter of introduction to the Duchess of Manchester. Knowing the value of such a patron, I sent the doctor's

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letter to the Duchess as soon as I reached England and even before my matinees began. A note came very quickly in reply asking me to call on a certain afternoon at Portman Square.

Dressed in my best outfit, and with a keen realization of how much might depend on this interview, I rang the bell at Portman Square. A butler gave me an appraising look and said, "Yes, Her Grace is in and will be pleased to see you. Will you kindly wait in the hall?"

He disappeared, and presently, sweeping down the stairs, came a tall, gracious figure who extended her hand and said in a breezy manner, "You're the little girl that Holbrook Curtis wrote me about. You dance, don't you?" I said, "Yes," and she answered briskly, "Thank God you don't sing."

When I looked my question she explained, "Because every season I have these young American singers sent over to me. They're lovely, but I don't know what to do with them all. Now tell me about this Oriental dance that the doctor seems so crazy over."

"It is a temple dance," I explained, "*The Dance of the Five Senses*. I use flowers and incense and bells and I have a company of Hindus."

The Duchess looked intrigued. She nodded her head brightly once or twice and promised, "I'll ask a few friends in to see whether it is suitable." I was pleased and relieved by this assurance.

We gave a performance for her, and *Radha* was found acceptable. Two days later Pat came whooping into my room with a telegram in her hand which Mother had just received. "Oh, Densie, darling," she cried, "you're going to dance for the King."

I knew that to dance for the King was the beginning of all success in London.

The drawing room where I was to do *Radha* was, of course, a perfect Victorian room, with tall windows, flowers everywhere, and a select circle of seats for the Duchess' distinguished guests. King Edward sat in the center with his favorite, Mrs. Keppel, next him. Everyone seemed in good humor, and when the signal was given, the butlers put out all the lights except those that shone on the corner where *Radha* was to appear. The platform for dancing was very small (it has been usual in my life that space is generally in inverse ratio to the distinguished surroundings) and I seated myself on my throne with great dignity, the few boys I had chosen following me closely. As I waited for the overture music, cross-legged under the blue light, which was trained on me by the butler, I was aware of the genial King, relaxed and comfortable in the midst of his friends, being entertained by a Hindu goddess. They



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seemed a somewhat unrelated pair, Edward VII and Radha, but he appeared to be enjoying himself.

There was a brief flutter of applause as I finished, and he murmured a gracious word or two before I bowed myself out of his presence. The Duchess came to my dressing room, smiling and apparently well pleased.

My social career in London was launched. The word spread and several other society engagements in London followed. For three successive nights I danced at Lord Lonsdale's. He made a habit of lumping all his social obligations together and entertaining in a descending scale of social distinction. They proved, however, an ascending scale of success for me.

On the first night a marquee and stage had been set up in the gardens. On this occasion no one less than a lord or lady sat in the gilt chairs marked off by wonderful rugs on the lawn. At the conclusion of *Radha* well-bred heads turned to each other and said, "Rather charming, isn't it?" But even before I had left the stage, bowing in a tremulous and uncertain manner, they had taken up the thread of their gossip, and I was already banished from the focus of their attention. We laughed about this a good deal downstairs where I was dressing on the butler's floor.

On the second night slightly lesser folk had been invited, and there was a little more warmth in the atmosphere. On the third night some of the intelligentsia and artists and writers had been invited (although some of the grand ones filtered in as well, for the London papers accounted for the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, the Princess Louise, and the Russian and German ambassadors) and we all enjoyed ourselves immensely.

Among the letters of introduction which Dr. Curtis gave me was one to Sir Laurence Alma-Tadema. This generation has almost forgotten the exquisite Greek scenes painted by Sir Laurence. *A Reading from Homer* was perhaps his most famous and charming. I had long loved them, and when I learned that I was to meet Sir Laurence I was delighted.

After I had presented my letter of introduction he asked to give a party in my honor. His enchanting house in St. John's Wood was the gathering place of the intelligentsia and artists of the period, and on the way to my dressing room where I was to change into my *Radha* costume, I caught a glimpse of the famous panels that had been painted by fellow artists for him.

Sir Laurence was short of stature, with a Van Dyck beard and a charming manner. He wanted to do everything to make my evening a

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success. With his own hands he put a sheaf of lilies around Radha's shrine and arranged some beautiful curtains for the Hindus to draw. At the conclusion of the performance he gave me a cup and saucer of Indian filigree work. I was told later that he was so delighted with the success of the evening that he talked about it for days.

I met John Sargent for the first time that evening. We talked for a little while. He was genial and charming, but he reminded me persistently of a fox-hunting squire.

One day, shortly after, I was downtown shopping and, having bought a *London Times* which I had not had time to read, I clambered into a two-wheeler and started home. I turned to the front page and exclaimed, "Thank God!" There, before me, was the announcement of the murder of Stanford White by Harry K. Thaw. Instead of horror I felt a curious sense of relief. I had loved him so much that I had sensed, even though I knew very little about his life of pleasure and excitement, that a great soul was being destroyed by the very forces in which he sought to live. His wonderful life could only go over the crest and down into the valley below had he lived any longer, and his death seemed a merciful climax. But my human heart was saddened for days. Not only had I lost someone very dear, but a radiant spirit had been blotted out of the world.

During my matinees at the Aldwych Theater I met the great Charles Frohman, who I am sure regarded me as quite outside his familiar orbit of activity. He was friendly during our brief interview, but I saw very little of him. I must have seemed very unimportant to him, for the matinees had not been a huge success in a commercial sense. They attracted a number of well-known people who, like the Hudson Theater audiences, spread abroad the unique quality of these performances. Mrs. Pat Campbell, whom I regarded as one of the great romantics, came back ■ congratulate me with real sincerity. I knew her appreciation for the subtler aspects of art, and I was genuinely touched. The Maharajah of Kapurthala came back also to my dressing room and thanked me most beautifully for the Indian dances. But London never has been fond of solo performances. They love a full ballet and spectacle above all things, and yet as the years went by I grew to love and be loved by the Londoners.

When the matinees were drawing to a close it seemed impossible to look for any further help from Frohman, and we wondered what the next step was to be. Harris, of course, had gone home by now, and although he maintained an artistic interest in my career he had no further financial concern at this time.

On the heels of our bewilderment came a call from a French im-

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presario whose name I cannot remember. I went to his office alone, although Mother generally accompanied me. It was the usual dingy theatrical office, and I was dressed very plainly in a dark tailored suit, with my hair drawn back under a nondescript hat.

Monsieur X looked like a great toad. He had a huge, white, unhealthy face with popeyes, and near him, during the interview, sat his lady friend in all her Parisienne chic. She was blond and very pretty and elegantly dressed from top to toe, but had a bored, why-should-I-be-kept-waiting expression on her face. Half contemptuous, half interested, she looked me over, and my blood boiled.

I had brought along a little booklet which contained pictures of *Radha* and some extra photographs. And these, during the course of the interview, changed hands. I talked very earnestly and he answered me quite as earnestly: I might appear at the Olympia Theater in Paris if I would accept a figure so low it would not have paid the expenses of the company.

I felt sick and helpless. When I demurred he at once changed his unctuous tactics and began to threaten me, saying that he controlled all of the Paris vaudeville theaters and I would either work through him or stay out of Paris.

Beaten and bewildered, I closed the door on his insolence and on the half smile of his lady friend.

I went home to my family and reported the interview. One of our frequent crises seemed upon us. Since no definite offers had come through the matinees the fiasco of the French agent threw us into a state of depression and bewilderment, and we did not know which way to turn. We had counted so much on the outcome of the London engagement to build us a European reputation, so necessary in the United States at that time, and now we sought hopelessly for some solution.

At the end of three days of dark despair one of our heavenly intercessors materialized. He was a little blond, well-dressed, pleasant man who looked German but proved to be Russian. His name was Braff and he appeared one afternoon after a matinee. In recalling the incident sometime later, he said with a twinkle, "You know, Rutie, I had been four or five times ■ your show, but I was so certain you would be surrounded by all the secretaries and managers in London that I did not dare go near you. But finally I said, 'There's no harm in trying,' so I asked the stage-door man if I could see you, and he said, 'Oh, yes. You'll find the Mother in on the stage.' So I wandered in, and sure enough there was Mother putting away some of the properties, and when I asked ■ I could see you, she said, 'Yes, I'll go and see ■ she's

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dressed.' Imagine my amazement, Rutie, at finding you so simple and unprotected."

We all loved Braffie from the start, and he loved us. I told him the story of the French agent. He knew Monsieur X and, swearing a few dynamic Russian oaths, vowed he would get me into Paris. He dashed away to his partner, a German named Shereck, to whom he announced that he had discovered a find. That night he left for Paris to see what he could do.

We were still sustaining ourselves on the enthusiasm he had left when he was back again. With a flourish he laid a contract for the Marigny Theater in Paris on my dressing table. It seemed that the Marigny was the only theater in Paris not controlled by Monsieur X.

I felt the effects of the loosening tension, and the strain of the last three years swept over me. Braffie, taking one look at me, said I must have a vacation. He proposed that I go to a French watering place, Vimereux, not far from Boulogne. But how could I go? I had no money. I had a large group of Hindus for whom I was responsible, and much baggage. Within the next day or two Braffie returned with some money. "I borrowed it," he said. Not until years later did I know that he had indeed borrowed it, but not in the way I imagined. His partner, Shereck, a bluff German not at all given to the social amenities of dapper little Braffie, had also believed in me enough to mortgage his house for the money needed for the vacation.

The two weeks' vacation was a period of heavenly rest, broken only once by a romantic excursion down to Paris, ostensibly to inspect the Marigny, but in my mind to "see Paris." Braffie and I left Vimereux together, in spite of Mother's protests. She never really distrusted Braffie as she did so many of my casual beaux, but she questioned the wisdom of a night in Paris together. Phrased in this way it did sound ominous, but it turned out to be merely romantic.

My only other visit to Paris had been the hurried one in 1900 when I had seen Sadi Yaco and the Exposition, and at that time I had been in no mood to sense the haunting quality of the Paris streets at night. But Braffie knew only too well what would appeal to my romantic temperament.

After the business of the day was over he hired an open barouche. I, of course, put on my prettiest dress, and as I took my place beside him I was all aquiver with the romance of this adventure. We said very little. Occasionally Braffie would put a question to me, or look to see how I was responding to his beloved city. The soft summer air and the swaying of the carriage lulled me. I found the long French windows

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and balconies hauntingly beautiful. The *Camille* of my childhood days hovered in my mind, and I visualized all the possible love scenes that were being enacted behind these curtained windows.

We clop-clopped slowly through deserted streets, and sometimes I sighed, and Braffie said, "What is it, Rutie?" And I would answer, "Oh, nothing that I can explain, Braffie . . . just the beauty of the city, and you and me."

He smiled and squeezed my hand. He understood, I think, that he alone did not spell love, but that in combination with the beauties of the night he shared the patina of romance that lay over everything within my radius.


Tender little Braffie! He knew very well that this evening in Paris was merely an opportunity to swell my romantic heart for a brief moment before the severities of my artistic life began again.

I returned to Vimereux for another week, and on August 16, 1906, came back to Paris to begin our rehearsals. Mother and Buzz, who by now was becoming an excellent stage manager and treasurer, had never been in Paris, and they were deeply suspicious of the ways of French porters. Braffie had to reassure them; bundle us, our boys, and a maid into taxis; arrange for the delivery of our compartmentful of hand baggage and of endless trunks and crates. At length he had us all distributed and we descended upon Paris.

We had gone only a few blocks when consternation seized us. To our horror we found announcements plastered all over Paris announcing that Mme. Radha, the "Original Hindu Temple Dancer" would open at the Olympia on the following night.

Buzz muttered, "Sis, I bet I know who did that." Braffie exclaimed, "Rutie, Rutie, this is terrible!" And Mother, after her first shock, leaned back in the cab with tight lips and that inward look to her blessed gray eyes which said quietly, "Well, dearie, here's another test of our faith."

I knew, without hesitation, what had happened. Monsieur X, realizing that I would probably find a way to appear in Paris and having in his office all my photographs and a complete description of the dance of *Radha*, had not found it difficult to get a scene painter to copy the set or to find an exponent of the *danse du ventre* to represent Radha. We lost no time in buying tickets for the Olympia. The performance was cheap and sexy, even worse than I imagined. I sat, torn between rage and a desire to giggle. All the tricks of the French side-show artist were employed. The curtain finally fell to a faint smattering of applause. I sat, hardly able to move. Then a hand fell on my shoulder and I looked



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up to see Hamilton Revell, the Cossé of *Dubarry*. I was overjoyed to see his smiling, friendly face.

"I came, believing that Radha was you," he explained. "You should see a lawyer. Let me help you."

He spoke French exquisitely, and I snatched at anything that might break this impasse to my appearance in Paris. He spent three days with me, going from one lawyer to another. But none of them would accept a losing case. They told me plainly that I was an unknown American girl with no prestige and money, and that Monsieur X, controlling all the theaters in Paris, was a force they did not care to encounter.

Cossé was sympathetic and faithful in his interpretative ministrations, but we soon realized that nothing could be done. My future in Paris seemed done for. The critics said with complete accord, "We had been informed that a remarkable Hindu dancer, strangely enough from America, was about to appear in our midst, but if this is an indication of the phenomenon, we beg leave to pass to something better." The Marigny was disgusted with the whole business. They said to Braffie, "We've seen this show over at the Olympia, and if that's a copy we don't want the real thing."

They would not let me rehearse my music, giving me one excuse after the other. The Society of Authors and French Composers declined to allow me to use my *Lakmé* score. Within a few days I had to find someone who would completely rewrite my music, and it cost me four hundred francs to have the phrases rearranged.

Braffie devised a clever stunt which he thought might give a desirable fillip to publicity. He had Clarkson's of London make me a black wig, and he took me, dressed in a sari, for a drive through the Bois and we had tea out under the trees. It is true that we lined the way with people, and that there was much nudging and ogling, but the basic situation remained unchanged.

The only person who appeared to be undiscouraged was the Marigny publicity man. Braffie had arranged for an interview. The man took down a little data about *Radha* in an absent-minded way, and then asked me who was my American "protector."

"Protector," spoke up Mother, "I have always protected my daughter." Our interpreter at this point tried to explain on his own responsibility what a protector was. The publicity man, meanwhile, sat with an expression on his face which plainly said, "What can I do if she has no protector?"

I was rather intrigued by the whole proposition, but Mother, when the implications began to dawn on her, drew herself up in her little

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blue bonnet and announced, "My daughter is just a young artist. And this dance of *Radha* she has created herself. Her manager is Mr. Harris, a very fine married man, and Mr. Braff has arranged for her to appear at the Marigny Theater. Your question, therefore, has no application to my daughter."

The publicity man shrugged his shoulders, made a grimace, and took his departure. Braffie was in despair, for now my publicity would be where all my other Paris opportunities had gone. Buzz and I were inclined to snicker over the interview, but Mother continued to sniff her disapproval all the way home.

It would be difficult to imagine her expression when Braffie brought us *Le Journal* the next morning and there, blazoned for the world to see, was the announcement that for the first time my true life story was about to be revealed.

It seems I was born in India. My mother was a high-caste Brahman girl who fell in love with an English officer, and I was raised in the precincts of a Hindu temple and trained to be a Devidassi until I reached the age of twelve. In due time I was initiated into the mysteries of temple worship—I, a beautiful sloe-eyed creature with undulating hips.

But one day a French officer passed by the temple. (This was necessary, since I had to appear in Paris.) He saw me dancing in the mysterious recesses of the temple, and, being a Frenchman, instantly fell in love with me. Without benefit of clergy, he brought me to Paris. (We are now drawing nearer and nearer the Marigny.) But, alas, my Frenchman tired of his little Indian dancer. I am in poverty and grief. What to do? Ah, I remember my Indian dances, since, of course, I have brought all my gorgeous costumes with me, and tomorrow night you will have the pleasure of seeing *Radha's* famous temple dance at the Marigny Theater.

Braffie was pleased because this extravaganza gave me publicity, and as George M. Cohan would say, "They did spell my name right." Buzz and I whooped with delight, and Mother attempted to put into words her disgust for Parisian publicity men.

But even this dazzling story did not soften the hearts of the theater managers. They would not give me my scenery or properties until the dress rehearsal, and we never knew what new trick they would produce to cheat me of my engagement. But since we had obeyed the letter of our contract, they could not hinder me forever.

In the midst of all these tensions Mother's faith, as always, held good. There might still be a loophole through which they could crawl

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through the contract, and we needed to be very calm and steadfast. One evening Mother picked up *The Light of Asia* and read aloud these lovely lines: "The unarmed Buddha, looking with no trace of fear or anger in the monster's face, with pity said, 'Poor friend, even thee I love . . . hate hath no harm for love, and peace, unweaponed, conquers every wrong.'" We both realized then that we must release ourselves from our resentment before the way to success would open.

Two days before my debut we gave a press performance, and my troubles were over. Braffie had seen that the best critics were on hand. Many of them came backstage, and I knew instantly that success had reached us over the machinations of our enemies.

I was much too happy to remember what the papers said, but the reviews were sufficient to pack the house on the opening night, and induce an atmosphere of silence and respectfulness when the significance of the temple ritual was grasped. Many distinguished people came, most of whom were not frequenters of the Marigny Theater.

Much more than at any other time the complete turn of the tide had come. All that we believed and hoped and struggled for was at last arriving, and arriving beyond our expectations.

Society, in the person of the Baron and Baronne de Rothschild, came, not only to the performance but backstage to my dressing room, and the Baronne invited me to tea in her lovely house on the Avenue Matignon, and later sent letters to another batch of Rothschilds in Vienna. Critics wrote of me at great length in the papers, precipitating long discussions, and offers began to come from Germany for a winter's tour. Sometimes a large crowd waited outside the stage door to watch me go to my carriage, and of course there were endless flowers both from American friends as well as the French.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox and her husband came to dinner in our apartment. She had been to the performance the night before and had written a lovely paragraph.

*Radha* is a dance and a hymn, a prayer, a picture, and an epic poem all in one. Here is another woman who has created a new thing in art, and again in the realm of Terpsichore. Let her name go into the Hall of Fame. She has elevated her art and given the world a beautiful work.

Mabel Pollion of an old New York family came into my life at this same time through a poem on *Radha* which she wrote under her professional name of Margaret Noel and published in *The Theater Magazine*. We have been constant friends to this day, and I grew especially



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fond of her mother, who was not only a delightful hostess but a ceramic artist of great distinction.

One afternoon, at the Marigny, the house pressman announced that a newspaper girl, a friend of Rodin, had arranged for me to go to his studio the next afternoon at three o'clock. Mother was busy; and the studio not being far, she allowed me to go alone—"allowed" is the word I mean. I had only time to look around the great sculptor's studio with its casts, unfinished models, and soft lighting, when the girl reporter announced that she had business elsewhere for a while. I thought little about it, since she said that she would return very soon.

Rodin and I exchanged our amenities in pantomime, and after a while he told me in French and pantomime that he wished to see my arms ripple and would I please remove my blouse. I was enormously impressed by this great man, but I felt a curious wave of reluctance to do as he asked. Shyly and unwillingly I removed my belt, undid the buttons of my shirtwaist, and revealed my little chemise. He equipped himself with a pad and some crayons and I turned my back on him and began to ripple my arms as I did in the *Incense*. As he worked he cried, "*Ses beaux jambes, ses jambes extraordinaires—encore, encore!*" My vanity was fed, and I did not realize that while M. Rodin's pencil was busy his eyes were examining me questioningly. When he said I might rest I turned around, and before I could put on my blouse he came over and, kneeling beside my chair, began to kiss my arm from wrist to shoulder, murmuring endearments. He started to embrace me, and I became very frightened. At this moment, as in a novel, the girl reporter returned. I was white with anger, furious both at the girl for her well-staged desertion of me and at Rodin. Not only had he frightened me, but something more grave had happened. I had been disillusioned by a great artist, whom I found to be only an ordinary French sensualist. Although I was invited to his home in the country and met his wife, my respect for him never came alive again.

During all these days of excitement and adulation I never forgot that in these performances I was doing something besides entertaining the public. The spiritual levels of my life flowed ever underneath, and supported and gave direction to all that appeared on the surface. Mother's faith in the goodness of God, my own realizations, derived from Christian Science, were holding even in these confusions, pleasant though they were. At this time I began a custom which lasted through five or six years of dancing *Radha*. My approach to the performance, after my body had been browned and the fleshings adjusted, was at least a half an hour of meditation. My maid would dress me in the elaborate

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costume, hang my jewels about me, put my wig on carefully, and set my crown. Then, when I was completely ready, I would put her out, shut the door, and for a brief thirty minutes realize my contact with the one Mind and, through an inner discipline, seek to dissolve the lingering irritations, personal relationships, and the petty human atmosphere which inevitably accompanied me into the dressing room. By the time I had left to go on the stage I was truly the priestess in the temple. I believe that more than all the incense and trappings that seemed so vivid to the audience it was this touch of impersonal spirit which held their lasting attention.

In the deepest realm of my emotions nothing was happening. On the surface there were of course Frenchmen asking for meetings, much kissing of hands, photographs taken by the celebrated Paul Boyer. A Monsieur Tallaso, who finally wrote a lovely article about me for *Le Théâtre*, came oftener than interviews warranted, but he, like several others of the period, disappeared when he found that the apparent voluptuousness of the unclothed body of Radha failed to materialize in the person of the girl. My worship of the god of love was singularly lacking at this time.

My own success did not conceal from me the vulgarities of the theater in which I worked, nor the persistent efforts of the French theatricals to question the sexlessness of Radha. This aspect of the French theater was especially disillusioning to me. The Marigny Theater itself was merely a showcase for the ladies of the stage to exhibit their charms.

The beauty of the little theater, buried in the lovely groves of the Champs Elysées, the chic and gaiety of the performances, did not conceal from my still innocent eyes the sinister fascination of the *promenoir*. Here, in a space behind the orchestra seats, the beautifully gowned, restless-eyed cocottes of Paris promenaded, both during the performance and in the entr'actes. Young Frenchmen came to make their selections and American papas to gape and marvel.

I doubt if Paris, which had not yet risen to a sexless and impersonal view of the dance, would have paid any attention to a concert performance. Paris, like London, has always liked its dance spectacles. Of course Braffie did the best he could, but on the whole it was a terrible experience, for the drunken stagehands, who apparently had their clubrooms in the flies over our heads and spilled bottles of claret over our costumes, were symbolic of the conditions to be found backstage in French variety.

One night after our performance I went to the Ambassadeurs and

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stood in the very archway where poor Zaza had stood so long ago. I began to wonder, as I looked at the gas globes in the inclosure by the stage door where the flickering leaves of the low trees cast their shadows, whether Zaza's words were not coming true in my life—"Through much misery, much grief, and a little luck" I would find my place as an artist.



## CHAPTER VI: Europe and the Long-Legged

**Child:** My **FIRST** engagement at Berlin was the opening of a whole new cycle in both my creative and my human life. Not only did I remain for nearly two years in Germany and Austria, dancing without a week's vacation, but I sensed from my first press performance that a new quality of thought, a deeper appreciation than I had ever known before was to be mine.

Berlin, at that time, was a very modern city, exceedingly clean and orderly. The opera was flourishing, for these were the days of Geraldine Farrar's great success; the Kaiser was brewing politics, and occasionally honoring the theater; Reinhardt was beginning to make his influence felt throughout the world of the theater. Duncan had been in Germany about two years before and had left such a profound impression that audiences were awakened to a whole new art which bore no relation to folk dances and opera ballet, the only dancing they had known. Indeed Duncan, whom I had not seen at this time but whose name was ringing through the dancing world, had made such a great success in Germany that I questioned deeply whether they would also welcome me.

Hans Gregor, the director of the Komische Oper, was to produce *Lakmé* in order that I might give my *Cobra* dance in the street scene of the second act, although my first Berlin appearance was to be a solo recital at which I was to give the *Cobra*, *Incense*, and *Radha*. I arrived on the sixth of October, 1906. My great success in Paris had preceded me, and everywhere was an eager expectancy to discover what this new dancer had to offer. I immediately felt this atmosphere, and something in me began to open up and respond to this new country which was to give so much to me in joy and satisfaction. Here, in the theater, everything was neat and orderly and efficient, sharply in contrast with the disorder and indifference of the Marigny. Here art was accepted and respected, and no questions asked.

However, I did come up sharply against the classics in the person of the musical director, who would not accept my variations in tempo of

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the traditional score of *Lakmé*. It was my first encounter with the orthodox attitude of music toward the dance. I was made to feel that I was an interloper who had strayed into the sacred realms of music. We were finally lodged at an impasse until Hans Gregor announced firmly that I was there to be satisfied.

At last, after many hours of rehearsal with lights and music, we gave a press performance. Gregor and Braffie had asked everyone of importance in Berlin, and our reception left nothing to be desired in enthusiasm. The applause was tremendous, and the papers the next morning established my success more firmly than I had ever known before. Of course one or two papers ran along on the pseudo-humorous strain I was accustomed to, and apparently laid stress on my bare waistline and brown skin, for Braffie came back to my dressing room the next day with a worried look in his pale blue eyes and said, "Rutie, you must let the police look at your tummy." "Why?" I asked. "The morals of the German public must be preserved," he answered with a twinkle, "and the police want to be quite sure you are not endangering them." So I turned and twisted for two representatives of the law and they were apparently satisfied that I was not a menace, for I continued with my tummy painted brown.

The next morning I was brought a critique written by the Viennese poet, Hugo von Hofmannstahl, whose *Elektra* had been set to music by Richard Strauss. My ears drank in the translation of this beautiful prose poem, which at once set a new standard of literary quality for press notices, as well as of a more penetrating appreciation of all that I was trying to do. Years afterwards, through the kindness of the Baroness von Nostitz, I was able to read her translation of the much longer article that Hofmannstahl had written at that time, of which the newspaper clipping was only a portion.

"*The Incomparable Dancer*," he wrote, "in this extraordinarily hieratic art—strange combination of a strangely alive being with primeval tradition—every trace of sentimentality had vanished. It is the same with her smile, and this it is that from the first moment estranges the hearts of women and the sensual curiosity of men, when seeing Ruth St. Denis. And it is just this that makes her dancing incomparable. It borders on voluptuousness but it is chaste. It is consecrated to the senses, but is a symbol of something higher. It is wild, but bound by external laws. It could not be other than it is. I saw her for a quarter of an hour, and there were moments—such as falling down, kissing her own fingers, drinking from the bowl—that have impressed themselves upon the memory as does a noble detail from the Elgin marbles

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or a color of Giorgione. She will take her own place wherever she appears. Her wonderful directness—that severe almost repellant directness—her sublime earnestness that is without touch of pedantry, all this creates about her that isolation that ever surrounds the extraordinary.”

This objectivity and concern with me as an artist characterized all German consideration. What I did was regarded from an impersonal point of view. My dancing was weighed against the other arts, its relation to philosophy, poetry, painting, sculpture was considered and appraised, its influence upon all these arts discussed. This was a profound revelation of new attitudes towards all art as well as my own, and I believe I was never so happy as in these early days in Germany. Everything was wonderful. I had to work hard, but when I was free, the days were spent with delightful people, and I was taken to see all the wonders of modern artistic Berlin.

I saw Reinhardt's production of *Lysistrata* at his Little Theater which he reserved for more intimate or more experimental plays. While a good deal of its German bawdiness went over my head, the color and action was more delightful than I have seen in any subsequent Reinhardt production. I met him afterwards and he spoke very charmingly to me about my performance. Much of the influence of the Indian dances must have been felt by him during my German years, for the pantomime for *Sumurun*, produced later in New York, showed a clear derivation not only in costumes and movements, but also in the action of the incidental dances.

I saw Wedekind's *Awakening of Love*, with its strange mixture of realism and poetry. I cannot say that it appealed to me, any more than many aspects of German art of this time. A great cultural upheaval was taking place. Picture galleries were filled with spotted things, very rosy-fleshed and suppled ladies or hospital scenes painted with alarming realism. To me it was obstetrical. Richard Strauss was the great composer of this period, and his curious mingling of dynamic strength with morbidity of coloring, of grand scope and vision with curious dissonances was difficult for my temperament to love although I came gradually to realize what a great master he was within his own frame.

It is interesting to wonder why the dance found its renaissance at this same period. What are the great spiritual, underlying causes which make the dance bud and blossom at a certain time, what elements in the human economy demand a rebirth? Possibly it came at this period as a counterbalance to the growing concern with a mechanized world, or possibly as an offset to the disintegration of personality which ■

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brought about by the endless variety of interests, of work and pleasure, since nothing can provide a more integrating force than the dance.

Duncan was, to those who had been fortunate enough to see her, a vivid echo of Greek loveliness. Her unforgettable power of stirring the mind to the ideal of Greek culture and her insistence upon the use of great music was reverberating in the artistic atmosphere of the dance. I suppose the opera ballet was going on its usual way, although I did not see it. But it must be remembered that the traditional ballet—that highly involved, highly technical form of rhythmic art—was suffering at this period, probably because it had never penetrated into the deeper elements of spiritual culture, whereas Duncan's return to the natural dance penetrated in less than one generation many phases of our development and gave us new standards of bodily normality.

The ballet represented aestheticism, whereas both consciously and unconsciously Duncan and I were attempting to fuse certain elements of life and movement into a deeper identification with the natural expressions of being than had been attempted since the golden age of the dance. I knew at that time, as I know now, that both she and I must rise and fall by that. Her weakness lay in the fact that her technical equipment was meager, but her power lay in an ideal which she gave to the entire world of the dance. My strength and my weakness lay in the choice of media. Had I put as much talent and energy into interpreting Christianity as I had into interpreting the Orient, I would today be an established institution, with my temple and school. But the end of the story is not yet, and I have swung slowly around to becoming an instrument for our Christian realizations to be manifested in terms of the dance.

In Germany, after the war, one saw men and women who were plainly conscious of new attitudes toward their bodies. I think Duncan and I may share honors, with the shortage of food, for this influence upon the body culture of Germany. Part of my success all over Germany was the amazement of the German mind at seeing so slender a body.

When I went to Frau Hartwig, the famous Berlin photographer, for some pictures, she begged me to have some nude photographs made, and she would not believe that I was twenty-six at this time, for I had the body of a girl of sixteen.

In these first early days there came into my life a significant figure, a radiant personality, called Constance Smedley. She was an individual in whose presence one immediately became more truly oneself than ever before. She never saw any reason why one should not attempt the biggest project his mind could hold.

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In her autobiography,\* *Crusaders*, she describes our meeting.

When I met Count Kessler in Berlin, I had asked him to indicate the most significant performance in the modern theatre movement, and he replied that the chief event of the Berlin season was the dancing of a young American, Ruth St. Denis. She had taken one of the largest theatres and everyone of note was crowding to see her remarkable series of Temple dances. Each dance expressed definite symbolic ideas and formed part of a sequence which conveyed deep religious feelings and aspirations. The transcendent beauty, dignity and sincerity of the work were a revelation and set this dancer apart from all others.

She herself was intriguing Berlin almost as much as her art. Germany understood and appreciated the disinterested study and hard work that lay beneath the outward imagery and beauty of her art.

I therefore wrote to the theatre and received a line appointing an interview at her hotel. As I drove through Berlin I remember a strange feeling overcoming me that this was one of the most important moments of my life. Meeting distinguished people no longer afforded any excitement but now it seemed as if I were being urged forward to meet a force with which in some strange way I should unite and which would be of great beneficence.

My first impression of Ruth St. Denis confirmed this. Association with Hindu temples and esoteric ritual had not been particularly sympathetic ■ me, but Kessler had vouched for the intrinsic beauty and sincerity of Ruth St. Denis and I knew he would not have the slightest sympathy with anything in the nature of a pose. Yet I was not prepared for the crystalline directness and normality I encountered. It was breath-taking to come into contact with anyone of such self-certainty. We could talk without any barriers. She told me about her work and what she was trying to express. Now success had come. It was good to make a success, but it had absolutely no connection with Ruth's inner life. . . .

Mrs. St. Denis was as untiring as her daughter; together they were forever improving and perfecting detail of setting, costumes, business. The energy they poured into their work never flagged. There was also much business to attend to. Ruth's brother served as business manager.

"Couldn't you come to supper after the performance?" said I. "I will invite anyone in Berlin you would like to know. What sort of people would you like to meet? Artists, poets, theater people, society people?"

"Why, no," said Ruth. "I'm really not interested in that sort of talk. . . . It gets one nowhere. I have all I can do to find out what I really want to know. But I would like to meet some of those people who are authorities on Egyptology. Berlin ■ a great center for archeology and I don't know how to reach that side of it."

"I can ask Dr. Alan Gardiner, the assistant editor of the Hieroglyphic Dictionary now being compiled by the German Academies," I cried. "He

\* Gerald Duckworth and Co., London.



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*is one of the most brilliant explorers in the field of Egyptology, and he and his wife are friends of mine."*

I can remember now the light that came into Ruth's eyes. The date of the supper party was fixed forthwith. To know—to know—that was then the motive power of Ruth's existence.

At this supper I sat next to Dr. Gardiner and paid very little attention to anyone else until he had answered all my questions. He responded to my enthusiasm and told me a hundred fascinating things. After my absorption had somewhat lessened I found Count Kessler a delightful companion. I knew him by reputation as a charming patron of the arts, a delightful social ambassador who spoke English like an Oxford man and had a genius for bringing people together for their mutual benefit. He asked if I would like to meet his great friend Hugo von Hofmannstahl, and I accepted with deep pleasure, telling him of my joy in his critique.

The entire supper was charming. According to Constance, we began that night an endless discussion on the moral relationship between life and art, between a man who plays like an archangel and goes home and beats his wife. At that time I had very strong opinions. I maintained that no matter how great an artist's work may be, he was in no wise excused from the moral obligation of ordinary living. But alas, many changes of understanding have happened since.

Some days later Count Kessler brought about the promised meeting with Hofmannstahl. I knew immediately that I had met not only a significant figure in German and Austrian culture, but a man whose personality stirred a strange beauty in my dormant emotional spirit.

He was a quiet, shy man, some thirty-five or forty years old, with an interesting but not a handsome face, and lovely dark eyes full of inward meditations. The poet and I became great friends. We used often to take long walks into the country where the mystery and beauty of Egypt and Babylonia would be evoked and discussed. He, with me, wondered what new revelations could be given in the dance along the lines that *Radha* had suggested. He had a rare spirit and one of those luminous minds that thinks and feels constantly in terms of beauty, with little of the egocentric mannerisms of lesser poets. He always sought to bring into articulation those semi-ritualistic, semi-emotional qualities which he sensed were not fully developed in my performance. His poetic mind stirred latent beauties of love which until now had never been roused into expression. We were in no sense loverlike in our attitude; but we were two artists, one a man and one a woman.

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We were sensitively aware of the values in each other, and the residue of our happy hours together was a haunting beauty, a feeling in myself of greater powers than I had yet expressed, and a real adoration for him as a man.

Through Hugo and, more directly, Count Kessler a most engrossing luncheon was arranged for me at the Automobile Club, following a special matinee at the Theater des Westens, in Charlottenburg, a suburb of Berlin. That was an exciting day. When I came out of the stage door of the theater the courtyard was jammed with people. They cried "*Wunderbar!*" and waved their handkerchiefs and programs at me and were so friendly and joyous that my artistic soul was soothed after the cool reception of London and the hectic evenings of the Marigny. Buzz had to force a path to the waiting automobile, where Count Kessler stood by the door. He whisked me in, and off we went to the Automobile Club.

This was the most wonderful luncheon I have ever known. Here were German actors, painters, sculptors, and writers. Hofmann, the muralist, Hugo von Hofmannstahl, Wedekind, the playwright, Gerhart Hauptmann, Richter, and others of that splendid group of artists in the Berlin of those days. Constance Smedley was also there, but I do not remember any other women.

This luncheon was my first intellectual gathering since I had come to Europe. Here I suddenly found I was not merely an entertainer, not merely a glamorous dancer or exotic novelty; I was an artist in the deepest sense of the word and the subject of earnest and critical analysis. To the German mind of that period the appearance of a new art form was a vital and significant thing, something that might have far-reaching effects upon their culture.

They asked me a hundred questions about my life, but not as the French would have done, with charm and piquancy, as of a woman. No, to them I was a serious young scholar, and they wanted to know how I had begun my work and how I was planning to carry on and develop this obvious talent for Oriental interpretation. Here was intellectual nourishment, not so much for my surface vanity as for my searching spirit. For I was then plagued by the ever-recurring question, Was I really giving something of value to the world or was I merely an Oriental dancer?

After my engagement with the Komische Oper I went to the Wintergarten, that famous *variété* known all over Europe. This place, while a vaudeville house, was beloved by the youth of the continent. All

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tourists, all students, and people from foreign lands must spend one evening at the Wintergarten. It was directed by a delightful personality, Herr Steiner. Unhappily, Hans Gregor regarded this as a trick on my part. It is true that although Gregor and Steiner had both offered me contracts when I was in Paris, Braffie had cannily signed me for the opera first, and Hans Gregor was apparently incensed that I had gone to the Wintergarten after the opera had established my prestige. He sued me, on the grounds that I had used the Komische Oper contract as a means of advertisement.

The announcement of this suit was made by two policemen, who banged on my door at seven in the morning and thrust a summons under my nose before I could get out of bed. I think I was more furious at their rudeness than at the suit, and threatened to go to the American consul until I was told that these invasions were customary when a suit was being served.

The grounds for the action were quite untenable, but it took several weeks for Braffie and the lawyers to bring it to a conclusion and win the case. Fortunately Gregor recovered from his anger, for I played a return engagement at the Komische Oper a year and a half later.

During the Wintergarten engagement I had an amusing visit after the performance. I knew that my arm ripple was the subject of much interest and speculation on the part of the public. In the *Incense* my arms were held out from the shoulder and were raised and lowered with a subtle rippling movement which began between the shoulder blades and seemed to extend through and beyond the fingers. In the *Cobra* the arms took on the undulating ripple of the snake's body. After my *Cobra* dance we would frequently see women furtively practicing the sinuosities of the snake dance in the orchestra seats or at the back of their boxes. But I did not know that it was also the object of scientific curiosity.

I had reached my dressing room one evening, when Braffie, with an amused twinkle in his eye, appeared and said that a group of German professors had witnessed my dances and wished to call upon me in a body. I still had my make-up on, and so, throwing an Indian shawl around me, I stood waiting to receive them. They made an impressive picture as they filed in, their ages ranging from fifty to seventy and their beards ranging from jaunty Van Dykes to generous cascades which fell over the stomach. Buzz gave me a look which said, "Well, Sis, what are you going to do with these old gazabos?"—which was Buzz's familiar and irreverent identification for all gentlemen over fifty with beards.

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There was much bowing and kissing of my hands, while Braffie stood, greatly amused, in the doorway. Finally one of the members turned to him and began a long and involved speech to the effect that they were anatomists who had been intrigued by the famous arm ripple which lay completely outside of any previous experience of theirs. Would the highborn be so gracious as to repeat this phenomenon in the more intimate confines of her dressing room? When this was translated I maintained, ■ my credit, a straight face and proceeded to roll back my shawl and ripple. Buzz gave a snort and disappeared. Braffie was also affected and soon faded out of the picture.

Four professorial backs were bent slightly, glasses were brought to better focus, as I went on rippling. One of them took off his pince-nez and began to tap along my arm from shoulder to wrist, explaining to his confreres in excited terms what, in his estimation, was happening to the muscles. This was too much for me. I began to laugh, and one or two of the others, with a hasty glance at my face, teetered back on their heels and stroked their beards, and we all laughed happily together.

I rippled with the right. I rippled with the left. I turned my back and, dropping my shawl chastely to my shoulder blades, allowed them to behold the wondrous beginnings of the movement.

They all talked at once, and they all exclaimed in various tones, "*Das ist wunderbar!* She has no bones. Yet it doesn't stop. It goes on and on." Finally, after more tappings, more close examinations, they clicked their heels together and bowed themselves out with many protestations of amazement and incredulity.

It is hard to realize now, when most dancers use an arm ripple, that at this period it did not exist as a part of the dance. I was the first dancer in the Western world to use my arms in such a fashion, and the German professors' astonishment was more or less echoed by all my audiences.

My engagement at the Wintergarten lasted for a month. At the end of that time I started off on a long tour of the principal cities of Germany, returning at frequent intervals to Berlin, which always remained my center.

During these months of playing, my surplus energies were very busy with two new Indian dances which were beginning to take shape. One was a *Nautch* scene, a fragment left over from the early days of *Radha*. The other, which I called the *Yogi*, was a natural flowering of my study of Yoga. This complex and highly developed concentration upon the development of the human personality in terms of spiritual and

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physical discipline had appealed to me strongly. As a dancer, intensely aware of the dominion which comes from the sense of bodily control, I was stirred to find that India had indeed given profound thought to this question. Perhaps in this dance of the *Yogi*, more than in *Radha* or any other I had ever done, is shown my inescapable necessity to manifest in outward form that state of consciousness which has attained a certain intensity of illumination. This, seemingly, is my use to life.

My *Yogi* scene was clear in my mind. I knew what I wanted to do and what the impression would undoubtedly be, but I had not solved the question of music. I felt that only a composer sympathetic to Indian philosophy could produce the music that I needed. When I returned to Berlin for a brief stay I talked this over with Constance, and she suggested that a very mystically inclined young English composer, Cyril Scott, might be interested in this idea. Constance sent him a wire and he came immediately to Berlin. We talked for a long time, and I found him sensitive and sympathetic, but he said quite frankly that although he understood certain phases of mysticism and *Yogi* philosophy, and was indeed a composer, he failed utterly to see how they could be related to the dance. So our proposed collaboration came to nothing, and this *Yogi* dance was as near being without music as was possible.

A short time before, I had met a slender, blue-eyed young German named Walter Meyrowitz who was to be my first German conductor. He was not only well equipped in this capacity, but he was also a delicate and beautiful composer. When Scott could make nothing of my *Yogi*, Walter undertook to help me. He arranged some Indian airs, which were played very hauntingly by a cello when, toward the end of the plastique, I enter into Samadhi, that state of superconsciousness, to the sound of voices singing *Yogi* songs to Shiva.

I do not know how I found the time to complete these dances. The tension of these days is impossible to describe. Every hour was filled with problems and work, interviews and rehearsals, discussions of new contracts and traveling. This kept up without intermission during my whole German tour. But the human organism can survive anything, it seems, as long as its vital centers are not invaded. At this time my emotional centers were untouched. My few very innocent *affaires de cœur* did not stir the real depths of my emotional life, and therefore the incessant tension of a career was sustained happily. Mother and Buzz were of course my constant support and protectors. Braffie—bless his little Russian heart—was, I think, very seriously in love with me. He, of the casual pretty mistresses, realized, however, that any development of his feelings would merely bring him to an impasse. He himself


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told me I should never marry, and he knew instinctively that I would never be his mistress. So he continued with indefatigable devotion to further my career with no personal satisfaction as his goal.

My intense concentration in my work made me less attentive to cities and places and events than I might have been. Naturally, a few places stood out because of some deeper significance. In Dresden I heard my first performance of *Tristan*. As I listened to the magnificent singing, and the long arias, and the acts which ran for an hour or more, I felt the sharp contrast between the world of insecurity which I had known from the moment I started dancing, where the value of all creations was judged from the quality of the entertainment and must conform to the whims of an essentially commercial audience, and this world which Wagner had made for himself, where a great art was subsidized or at least supported in such a manner that the unrestricted idea of the composer could be expressed in its entirety and still find a willing and eager audience.

I was intensely alive to the music and the beauty of the drama, but I did not have the emotional structure to cope with the tremendously long passages. The waves of music and the singing would pass through me and over me, because when I brought my attention to a complete focus I could sustain the intensity for only a certain length of time. I marveled at the audience, which, to my casual eye, appeared relaxed and in no way obliged to listen with the high pitch of intensity that my temperament and training demanded. In a word, these listeners possessed a music-loving consciousness, whereas mine was a passionate nature. Of course my real ability to understand this tremendous story of the tragedy and grandeur of love was unawakened. Only my intuitive sense led me to understand its magnificence.

Dresden was practically an American colony at that time, and one of my most lovable and staunch friends entered my life during this visit. Mrs. Milton Eisner of San Francisco and her daughter came to my dressing room one evening, and something of her lovely, sympathetic spirit drew me to her immediately. She came from that fine Jewish society of San Francisco which has not only helped so materially to build a love of art there, but has over and over again assisted artists as they came into its warmly appreciative atmosphere. We called her Auntie Dot. Until her death, many years later, the very name of Auntie Dot conjured up good times, delightful little presents at odd moments, and all the outward manifestations of a generous and lovable



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soul. The members of her large family remain my good friends to this day.

In Munich I encountered my first portraitist, and Mother drank her first glass of beer. Both of these things were exciting to us in their different ways. Mother's New England conscience fought gallantly with her first taste of the delicious Munich brew, which is like no other beer in the world, but she finally succumbed to an occasional glass and was forced to admit she liked it.

My portraitist was Hermann von Kaulbach, the most famous portrait painter in Germany since the death, a short time before, of the celebrated Lenbach. He was the distinguished son of a famous father, Wilhelm von Kaulbach, who had been foremost in the effort to revive the arts in Germany. Hermann was a dignified man of about sixty and wore an air of great respectability, as was very fitting to an aristocrat of his profession. When he asked to make a portrait of me Bräffe was of course delighted. Mother and I packed my new green *Nautch* costume and my smoke-gray sari. We were received in a very beautiful and large studio, which had an air of graciousness but little Bohemianism about it. Kaulbach was grave and courtly, and bent to kiss my hands. He treated me with a gentle but rather severe composure during the posings.

He painted me in both the green *Nautch* and the *Incense* costumes. They were extravagantly beautiful, although the *Nautch* portrait pleased me most, I think. It hung for a short time in the Metropolitan Museum and is now owned by a lady in Chicago.

I danced back and forth across Germany for a full year before I crossed its borders, always finding the most enthusiastic appreciation in whatever town I danced.

In December, 1907, I arrived in that old medieval city of Budapest with only Buzz for my companion, as Mother had returned for a time to America. To me there was something frightening and formidable about it, in spite of the Hungarian orchestras that wailed their mournful love songs in all the cafés. My nerves and my weariness fostered a state of mind that I might not have been aware of at another time. In a little journal kept at this period between performances, I breathed out this lament:

I am a child of nature. Too much civilization and a touch of luxury have only depressed me. I must find a way to live more simply. Surely I love my family, and this year without Mother has made me very lonely. I suppose this mood will pass, for "underneath are the everlasting arms." I must com-

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fort myself a little now with the thought that I have given pleasure to people, and have never done them any harm. I want to dance always, to be good and not evil, and when it ■ all over not have the feeling that I might have done better.

Budapest received me with the same intense appreciation that I experienced in every city on the continent. The men of my orchestra were particularly responsive, but the repetition of *Radha* for nearly two years had become a terrible grind. One night I did a thing I have never done before or since. In the midst of *Radha* I suddenly stopped dancing and, to Buzz's consternation, ran off the stage. I went to my dressing room and, locking the door, indulged in a fit of hysterics. Buzz of course rang down the curtain, and came to see what the trouble was. All I could repeat over and over with irritating monotony was, "I am not a machine." Some inner revolt had been set up in my system, and although I went on the next night as though nothing had happened I felt the intense surge and desire for creative work and some development in my artistic and emotional life.

As this unhappy and frustrating month in Budapest was coming to an end I suffered from another denial of human desire that had been, for so many years, characteristic of my career. In Berlin Hugo had introduced me to his brother-in-law, Hans Schlesinger, and a mild attraction was set up when we first met. It must be remembered that Hugo and I were never, in any sense, lovers, yet Hugo's personality had stirred such vibrations of romantic desire within me that when Hans began to haunt my dressing rooms and to take me sight-seeing I became a passive recipient of his obvious lovemaking. Hans was a slow-moving and slow-speaking, gentle soul, a dilettante who tried to paint in a leisurely manner, and had an indulgent and charming mother who undoubtedly softened whatever creative force he might have had. He was about thirty-three at this time, dark-haired, with a sensitive mouth and quiet, thoughtful eyes. In spite of being partly Jewish, he had a strong leaning toward Catholicism.

Hugo was greatly annoyed by this alliance, feeling—justly, I imagine—that Hans was not only an indolent artist but an uncertain lover. Once when we were sitting at a table in a café Hugo asked what Hans meant to me and why I kept him in the orbits of my life. I suppose that, being half in love with Hugo at the time, I resented what I called his dog-in-the-manger attitude, and I rose abruptly to Hans' defense. His tone of faint derision when he spoke of Hans stirred me deeply; yet at the same time I knew that what he was saying was correct, and this made me doubly resentful. My spirited reply put up a barrier



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between Hugo and me for some months. Now I realize that Hugo sensed much more clearly than I my great capacity for romantic love, and he hated to see me wasting—ah, prophetic soul!—my time and some measure of my heart upon one incapable of responding with understanding ■ the ardent and passionate gift I had to make.

Hans followed me from city to city during my tour, finding, it seems, a certain aesthetic pleasure in being near me, for he admired me as an artist very much. His lovemaking was never very urgent and he posed no problems I could not answer. His nature was the opposite of mine; he had a mellow kindness against which the sharp edges of my mind could find a kind of rest. He was thoughtful of me and did a thousand courteous things that life in our harried family had not permitted. He represented a culture, not, of course, comparable to Hugo's, but nevertheless with an undeniable charm of its own. He had sufficient income to do as he liked, and had had two or three mistresses before I met him and would have more after we parted. Yet to do his sensitivity full justice, he never indicated by word or deed that I might fill this empty post in his life.

I sometimes marvel that this girl of twenty-six, with a passionate and intense nature, could have been so unawakened to the deeper physical significance of love. I suppose there were many reasons for it. Most important of all, perhaps, was that I have always been five or six years behind the normal woman's developing sex life. I was still concerned with a romantic ideal. I was still aware of Mother's terrific fear, based on her New England Protestantism. At the same time my acceptance of Christian Science, in the way that I did, caused me to feel that my art life rested uncompromisingly on a sexless quality of mind and feeling, and that any influence on or penetrations of my love life would invade the vital center of my creative instincts and bring disaster. This state of mind rendered all my potential love affairs merely guilty disloyalties to my art. Thus all my growing desires were wrapped about with inhibitions. Possibly, however, I might have broken through this attitude of mind had I not been plunged so deeply into my work, and had Hans been a more importunate lover.

He arrived in Budapest shortly after I opened. He had come to say farewell before leaving for Rome, where he kept his studio. Rome! What that city conjured to my mind. We stood by the door in my hotel suite, his flowers surrounding me everywhere. Parting suddenly seemed impossible unless I would agree to come with him later for a little holiday in Rome.

That night I sobbed myself to sleep in a curious loneliness of heart.

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I knew that my visit to Italy would be carried through on a most innocent basis. There was the possibility that Hans had a different hope, but I knew that he did not touch deeply enough into my heart to invade my ideals. And yet the situation in all outward aspects was merely another frustration in a long series of frustrations which have made my emotional life a continual tragedy. On one side was the awakening, urgent joy of the senses, on the other the asceticism which made it apparently impossible to reconcile religion to my sexual life.

The fact that Hans merely represented a certain romantic attitude did not mitigate that frustration. I scarcely knew what I wanted in order to find romantic fulfillment. Mother was not there to give me whatever comfort lay in her power; Buzz regarded the whole affair with the maddeningly aloof tolerance of a younger brother. The engagement at the Orpheum was coming to an end, and I concluded that at least I could make the Italian trip an excuse for relaxation and holiday.

Buzz decided suddenly that he wanted to see Venice and when he separated from me, as I got on the train for Rome, he said, "I suppose you know what you're doing, Sis."

I truly believed I did. All my nerves seemed to relax and tension fell away from me. When the first cypress trees began to soften the landscape—so different from stark brooding Hungary—a great joy stirred within me. Then I saw the bright, tall Italian houses, with countless children swarming about the doorsteps, and finally the villas with their marvelous gardens, recalling all the romantic histories I had read, and I felt entirely rejuvenated.

When I got off the train in Rome and saw Hans waiting for me I felt an adventure was beginning, an adventure compounded of seeing Rome with a devoted lover who brought no impact of decision.

I went to the Grand Hotel, and did not visit Hans' studio until the next day. It was on the top of a typical Italian house with endless stairs and no sign of an elevator. His roof looked out over the Tiber, and I stood against the parapet, gazing at the Palatine, while Hans watched the varying emotions on my face as I responded to the wonders of his beloved city.

That evening at sunset I stood on the Palatine Hill and wept from exaltation and the realization that I stood in the midst of the centuries.

I, little Ruthie Dennis, was like someone moving in a dream.

Walking home with Hans at twilight on the Compagnia, watching a slow-moving shepherd and his flock against the cold yellow of the last light in the west, coming slowly back to the city, walking that unfor-

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gettable way under the twisted cypress trees and realizing that the Caesars trod these paths, I felt that all the world and all creative forces were mine.

One afternoon, in his studio, he asked me if I would pose my right leg in order that he might complete a nude on which he was working and for which he had no model. I slipped off my shoes and stockings and threw about me a blue and black Spanish shawl so as to have something picturesque in which to frame the leg. As I took my stand and exposed my leg, Hans gazed at it enraptured and then ran forward from his easel, dropped on his knees, and clasping my ankles, whispered, "Oh, Ruth, I did not know there was anything as white as your skin." Later at a little supper I tried to find some conclusion to these emotions which could have been so dangerous to my peace of mind.

After the landlady had pantingly brought a little tin stove up five flights of stairs and set out our supper on a checked tablecloth, we became very quiet. I think a more than ordinary mood of attraction bound us. The light was growing dim and after we had eaten I sat on a couch by the open window, while Hans lay on the floor, his head against my knees. It was a lovely moment, a magically subtle tension of beauty which all lovers know, but I realized suddenly and unequivocally that I would never want anything more of Hans than this perfect peace which was represented by the mellow glory of Rome and an undemanding lover at my knee. At that moment, in my own heart, I released myself and him from all possible entanglements.

Before I left Rome Hans took me to St. Peter's. His already strong leaning toward Catholicism was strengthening. In my Protestant mind was little of the reverence he felt, but he delivered a rebuke to me that afternoon which I have never forgotten. I made some facetious remark about kissing the toe of St. Peter, and he turned his quiet, meditative eyes on me and said rather severely, "Ruthie, you had better not talk about matters you do not understand."

When my holiday was over and I left Rome, I did not see him again. There was not enough inward satisfaction in our relationship to maintain it. Years later I received a little note from him, saying that in spite of my inability to respond to the Catholic culture he was sure I would rejoice with him to know that he had found peace, and had become a Catholic monk.

Bräffie was waiting for me in Prague where my next engagement had been arranged. Prague was another medieval city, stern and secretive, with narrow streets and a sense of existence outside of hurrying time.

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Buzz and I were still without Mother, and we lived in a *pension* with a great white porcelain stove and a concierge who had to be roused each night and tipped a few *pfennigs* since, as he protested, all decent people were in by nine.

We knew practically no one in Prague, and our lives consisted of playing at the *variété* in the evenings and wandering about the old streets in the daytime, drinking in the austere beauty of the Middle Ages. One day a chance acquaintance told us about a little jeweled chapel, which was the pride of the city. We were taken there, and found it more exquisite than we had imagined. Its stained-glass windows were superb examples of art, and the walls and pillars were set with semiprecious stones. It was a veritable jewel casket of a chapel. This would seem the very quintessence of beauty, but our friend asked the priest, "What, in this chapel, and parish, are you most proud of?" and the priest immediately led us into a little side room and lifted up, for us to see, a jeweled crown that had belonged to the church for hundreds of years and had been preserved with such loving care that, as we gazed upon it, it seemed as if it had been created only yesterday.

But all this aestheticism set one question vibrating in my soul. Could it really be possible that this priest, and doubtless his parishioners, regarded this crown rather than the healing and saving of a living soul as the summit of their achievements over the centuries?

In later years the whole question of idolatry, ritualistic tendencies, and symbolism, entering my thinking from different angles and attitudes, gave me more understanding and tolerance for those religions which flourished by their objectiveness. At this time, however, my religious impulses were uncompromisingly metaphysical. It is true that two elements in my nature would seem to deny the validity of this cold dispassion—the dancing of an Oriental ritual and my brief forays into romantic love. From one viewpoint they were irreconcilable, from another I was merely an intellectual religionist; but it took me many years to learn this fact, and meanwhile the three possessors of my nature were in frequent conflict. From the moral and theoretical point of view I knew all the answers, but my proud, willful, pleasure-loving heart would never wholly surrender itself to the discipline of spiritual teachings. My life was, unconsciously, departmentalized in both its motives and its demonstrations. My capacity for love had never been expressed in all of its dynamic fullness. My art life had been kept separate from my spiritual life except for brief moments of illumination when I sensed how they might supplement each other. And to make

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my life of the spirit and mind and heart even more difficult, each element was as real and pressing as the other.

I was like an accomplished financier who had never really earned any money or assumed any responsibilities. I knew the theory of metaphysics and my accounts, based on a certain hypothetical basis, added up fairly accurately. I understood, with my intellect, the spiritual foundations in Christian Science: first, the perfection of God, then His creation as a perfect mental projection or idea. I knew that this fact was the principle on which to base our human thinking in relation to an illusory world and the problems of our own life, but I seemed persistently unable to connect this with the other aspects of my life. The orthodox churches, the Catholic and the Episcopalian, which had rituals and color, shocked me by the horrible disparity between their aestheticism and the misery and spiritual ignorance of thousands of their parishioners. This caused deep resentments in my soul. The metaphysical church dissatisfied me because I believed it cold and passionless. Not until years later was I able to reconcile two seemingly irreconcilable elements which were not only present in my objective world but were also in my philosophy. For I was, you see, an artist, a lover, and a philosopher, at one and the same time.

I had long looked forward to Vienna. Both Hugo and Hans were Viennese, and they had filled my thoughts with the radiance of that city. There would be the Royal Opera to see, the Viennese orchestras in the cabarets to hear, and above all, the charming Viennese to meet. By now my *Nautch* and my *Yogi* were ready to be shown. On the opening night at Ronacher's *variété* I substituted the *Nautch* for the *Incense*.

I had first been attracted to the study of Nautch girls, not because they were religious dancers (they were entirely entertainers), but because in their dances they inevitably embodied some phase of the immortal song of Krishna, the god of love, and Radha, the symbol of the human soul. They were a part of the ancient culture of India, and this dance was a natural development in my Indian series.

The press was enthusiastic and complimentary, but I did not find my really distinguished success until a few days later, at a special matinee. On this occasion I gave only the *Yogi*.

The *Yogi* was entirely unlike the popular conception of a dance. It was an adventure and a risk; yet so much of my own spiritual longing had gone into its composition that I was forced to show it to the public. But could I hold a sophisticated and critical, although sympathetic,

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audience by a single mood, practically devoid of movement? The curtain rose on an Indian forest. In the center of the stage was a tiger rug on which a brilliant shaft of light shone, as though the sun were piercing the thick jungle. There was silence for some time before an Indian youth was seen coming slowly through the thick creepers. He was dressed in the conventional costume of a Hindu Yogi. He moved silently with a long, swinging stride, his head lifted slightly as if in ecstasy. Laying his begging bowl on the rug, he walked in a swinging, careless manner three times around the rug and then slowly sank into a cross-legged position, his posture meditative, his eyes closed. He began a rhythmic rise and fall of breath. His consciousness being thoroughly quieted, he then began with his right hand a slow but firm gesture from the shoulder, his palm out. Several other measured gestures followed without for a moment breaking the perfect posture of his torso. This posture symbolized his inward spiritual state. His gestures signified the discipline of his mind. But these were merely exercises which preceded a higher state of consciousness. He rose and quietly walked around the tiger rug and finally took up his position in the center of it. This movement suggested a higher plane of existence, which was typified by a more difficult balance of the head, arms, legs, and torso. To the north and to the south, to the east and to the west, above and below, he was at once invoking the presence of Brahma and offering his being as an instrument to be filled with the divine essence. Having raised the vibrations of his soul to this point, he slowly sank to the ground, his whole body collapsed and the head resting between the crossed ankles.

This was his moment of extreme receptivity, his waiting for the first stirrings of that superconsciousness which his whole exercise had been designed to bring. There was a breathless pause, and then very slowly he began his most difficult feat of balance as he rose slowly to his full height, with his eyes closed. In the distance one heard a thin, high voice chanting an invocation to Shiva. This chant was sustained while the arms were raised over the head, backs together, and then allowed to descend in a wide circle. The left hand, which had held the rosary, was dipped downward, and just as the curtain dropped, a faint click of beads falling to the ground was heard, a symbol that all the disciplines, all the outer supports and preoccupations had fallen away, and the individual soul of the Yogi had for a brief moment attained its union with the divine.

In spite of my familiarity with the response of audiences to these religious dances, there was barely any applause and I ran off the stage

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weeping. Or perhaps it is more true to say that I used the lack of applause as an excuse to release my taut nerves and desperate weariness through an attack of hysterics. I did what I have done on a number of occasions when real success has been attained. I ran to my dressing room, refused to take any bows, and banging the door shut, sobbed for twenty minutes that the *Yogi* was a failure. Braff and Mother tried to argue with me through the door, but it was nearly half an hour before I emerged. By now the audience had gone, and not until the next morning did I learn that the *Yogi*, which I thought no one would understand, had found great favor and that I had had a most satisfying success.

The *Wiener Tageblatt* said:

Like a being from another world, she worships Nature, and what we see her doing is highest art. We see movements and gestures that are strangely touching. Their effect is indescribable, even, as for instance, one cannot describe the way Duse walks. Through her merely "being there" Ruth St. Denis fascinated her audience.

That audience proved to have been very distinguished, indicating the unstudied interest the society of Vienna took in all the arts. The Princess Metternich, Director Weingartner, members of the Rothschild family, the Prince and Princess von Thurn und Taxis, the Count and Countess Palffy, Count Larisch, and the Prince and Princess Kinsky were present.

As a result of this performance the Princess Kinsky gave me a delightful luncheon, to which she invited many members of the afternoon audience. One of her chief guests was the elderly Princess von Thurn und Taxis, who started an animated discussion with the other members at the table as to whether the creative artist should work in the midst of the environment which he seeks to interpret, or whether it is better for him to live largely in his imagination.

To this question of the virtues of representational, or creative, or interpretive art I was able to answer only as far as my own experience carried me. Since I was destined to be an interpreter of certain phases of Indian thought and life, I said, my food for this purpose was found in the essence of Indian culture, focused and revealed through her artists, rather than in a participation in the actual life itself. It seemed to me, I explained, that had I been allowed to visit India before I danced I would have become hopelessly entangled in the details of daily life and would have been unable to adhere to my understandings of the soul of India. It seemed to me that the painter and the sculptor

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and the writer must of necessity steep themselves in the environment they wish to represent, but that the musician and the dancer should merely sip at the nectar of the artist's distillations, rather than attempt to digest the coarse food of the current life and culture of the people.

We then discussed the creative temperament in all its ramifications. I felt that this impersonal and yet enthusiastic atmosphere, this intellectual interest in my work, was the most heady kind of praise I could know, and was a further indication of the Germanic attitude toward art in all its forms. But in this case it was mingled with a charm of manner, a lightness of touch, that the German seldom possesses.

In the course of the luncheon the Princess von Thurn und Taxis said something to me I have never forgotten. "My dear child," she exclaimed in perfect English, made only more charming by her delicious Viennese accent, "you will learn when you are as old as I am that there are two kinds of people in the world, those who are life-increasing and those who are life-decreasing. You are one of the life bringers."

My Viennese engagement led to a great honor and a minor disaster. Nikisch, who was then conducting the Royal Opera, came to one of my performances at Ronacher's and the next day sent an invitation to Braffie for my appearance at the Royal Opera. Braffie was of course elated, for I believe no such tribute had ever been paid an artist in *variété*, but he committed one of those managerial blunders for which there is no accounting. We were booked the following month for Hamburg at a large figure, but instead of paying the indemnity and accepting the Opera engagement, Braffie politely declined this extraordinary honor.

As my month in Vienna was coming to a close Hugo von Hofmannstahl came one afternoon and took me to his house at Rodaun, on the outskirts of Vienna. There I met the lovely Frau von Hofmannstahl and his two sons. His study was a light, cheery apartment lined with books, and I believe we spent that first afternoon in Egypt. Another day we wandered through the crumbling ruins of an old estate where statues and cypress trees created a melancholy beauty. It was twilight, one of those deep green twilights with wisps of dark clouds across the sunset. We were both in a minor mood. Responding to something I said, Hugo turned and asked, "But, Ruth, has love never meant anything to you but *Sturm und Drang*?" and I replied, "No, Hugo, my whole being is a battleground from which there arises as yet no resolving victory." "Then, dear friend," he answered, "you do not know love. You only know desire."



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I realize now that I made Hugo believe my love experience had richer depths than was true. My incurable sense of the dramatic possessed me even on this occasion. And yet, from another point of view, there had been *Sturm und Drang*. As a young actress in America, as a dancer in Europe, I was forever separated from my loves by a midnight sleeper. Many times, while in D. B.'s company, I had walked out onto a platform late at night, linking arms with one of my beaux and strolling off under the trees. But our whispered words of endearment, our promises to write, were always cut short by the whistle of the train, and a pall of black loneliness would settle down upon me. To Hugo, whose curiosity about me was of an aesthetic and not an emotional nature, I could not explain, for some reason, that I did not yet understand the desperate pull of the human heart or the beauty and dignity of the human body as an instrument of love, or the language of true sensuality. Within myself I was a romantic and intense young priestess who now and then experienced the innocent raptures of romantic idealism only to have them thwarted by her dedication to her religion-art. *Sturm und Drang* indeed!

Richard Strauss' *Salome* was creating public furor at that time, and Hugo and I had long discussions of another type of *Salome*. These talks finally concluded, to my great joy, in his offering to write a libretto for me, and to find a composer.

We had some correspondence on this project, and I still have one of his letters, outlining some of his concept of Salome's character.

Rodaun, the 2nd of March.

This answer has been delayed. . . . I was waiting for Richard Strauss, who passed through Vienna, to have his advice about the musician. . . . I was very much startled with pleasure and excitement seeing you had found out that in Scene III, Salome must be seen worshipping an idol. . . . I found myself at the same spot that you stood on, just as the ghost of Hamlet's father, that old mole, is always exactly below Hamlet's feet—may he ever so often change his place. . . . You said once Salome must be full of colossal vanity, full of the most intense artistic egotism . . . she must express an immoral, a dangerous subduing of all nature, turning it to one point, making it subservient, not loving it as nymphs and dryads do. This is the tragic destiny of the great cocotte—to use and be used. . . . Her state of most exquisite self-sufficient egotism means that all things are turned to be her tool, all the sense of existence converges in her; one of her gestures ■ the sense and summit of existence. . . . Now this is an unbearable state and it must provoke a most distorted form of reaction. . . . This will be apparent in Scene III, the ghostly scene, the scene of Salome's weird and ever-

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lasting humiliation, the scene of the idol, of the fetish. This must not appear catastrophic; it is merely the symbol of a lasting state just as Scene I is the symbol of a lasting state, and both scenes interwoven form the totality of Salome's life. Scene I is the sun side of it and Scene III the moon side—the Astarte side. . . .

Alas, this project came to nothing, although Strauss recommended a composer and I had already designed my dance and costume. It was not for many years that I overcame my prejudice to the Wilde play sufficiently to both act in it and create my own choreography for the Strauss *Dance of the Seven Veils*. The dance I gave with the New York Philharmonic Symphony, and the play in which I incorporated the dance, I acted under the sensitive direction of Daniel Reed in Asheville, North Carolina.

At the end of February I said a reluctant and sad farewell to Hugo and my beloved Vienna.

We traveled north to Hamburg. To Buzz, especially, it was a fascinating city. Its wharves were the landing place of all the ships in the world. Sooner or later, trawlers and liners arrived from South America, from Africa, from India, and lining these wharves were countless little shops where one could pick up the oddments brought in by the sailors. These ranged from parrots and monkeys to priceless bits of ivory and silks. Buzz and I haunted these shops.

Here in Hamburg our thoughts often turned toward India. We looked wistfully at the great liners coming in from Bombay, but we knew that that great adventure was not ready for us yet.

Soon the inevitable return to Berlin was due. Wherever we went, whether to Wiesbaden, or Frankfort, or Düsseldorf, we always returned to Berlin and the old Central Hotel. I played at the Wintergarten, and I can see dear Manager Steiner sitting with me in a box, watching the other acts on the bill, ordering a Welsh Rabbit, which he knew I liked, and drinking his eternal glass of beer.

Over the footlights one night came a huge basket filled with green branches, and in the midst of them gleamed a dozen gold lacquer lotuses, like brilliant birds against the dark leaves. The card read, "With infinite admiration, Mariano Fortuny."

Bräffie told me that he was the son of the famous Spanish painter, and that he lived in Venice on the Grand Canal where he made Greek veils and reproduced the ancient Greek dresses. In order to thank him for his golden lotuses a meeting was arranged, and I found him a marvelous person, rather large as to girth, with a very white skin, black

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eyes, and a sparse black beard which made him look like the Chinese god of plenty.

His thoughts, at that time, were entirely bound up in what was called the Fortuny sky, a revolutionary innovation for the theater. Buzz and Braffie and I were taken one afternoon to a theater in Charlottenburg to see this sky and its lighting effects in operation.

His invention was a curious vacuumlike contraption which gave you the impression of being inside a balloon. It consisted of two elaborate air-filled compartments under two great spheres of silk. At the left of the stage was a pianolike instrument to be used for the play of the lights. Over the proscenium inside the stage was a color-trolley which moved in front of these powerful lights. By a touch on three or four buttons of his instrument he could transform these spheres into a sky full of sunrise or moonlight. The effect was overwhelming. The moment he began to play his lights I cried, "Your reproduction of nature is so perfect that your actors will look artificial. This sky belongs to dancers because of the harmony of movement and abstract costuming."

We stood spellbound during the entire afternoon, watching the lights in all their subtleties or intensities, and I wanted him to go on and on, but he insisted he must go home for supper. I seized his old battered felt hat to make him stay, and hugged it in my arms, and only after considerable expostulation and humor on his part would I give it up.

The influence of that sky is felt in every theater in America whether it is known or not. Under its inspiration flies have been done away with, and a huge bowl substituted—in most cases of plaster instead of the silk of Fortuny. But his original conception of silk spheres was used by the Paris Opera and several other opera houses in Europe.

Before I left Berlin I demonstrated his Greek veils for him at the great Wertheim store. These veils were given their shape by wooden molds, the designs of which were taken from bas-reliefs at Knossos. I can think of nothing more exquisite than these veils or his Greek gowns, which are the quintessence of chic to many fashionable ladies both in New York and in Europe, where he now has shops.

Just before we left Germany I was to give a performance at Bonn. The Crown Prince and his suite were passing through the town to a hunting lodge and, knowing they would be unable to attend the performance, asked if I would give them an informal performance in the drawing room of their little hotel. I found the Crown Prince more charming than I expected, a man of culture, and extremely sympathetic to the arts. His suite seemed especially fascinated by my Hindus. They

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asked many questions and confessed that East Indians were a race quite outside their experience.

Two wonderful years had drawn to a close, during which I had lived in a constant tension of excitement. It was incredible that Ruthie Dennis had been the center of it. Only yesterday, it seemed, I had been back on the farm or in Brooklyn, dreaming of all the things I would someday do. But in the interval, between the past and present, I had stood in the wings of the Komische Oper waiting to face my first German audience; I had been the recipient of unbelievably great praise; the Princess von Thurn und Taxis had asked my opinion on grave matters of art. The long-legged child from Sommerville had had her hand kissed by the Crown Prince of Germany. And everywhere I had found a deep respect for me and my art.

The prophecy of dear old Mrs. Barrett was coming true. The "Lord was my strength and He was making me to walk upon mine high places."



**CHAPTER VII: I Belong to America:** I LEFT Germany with tender regret. No other place could give me greater understanding and appreciation. The wonder of those two years was something I would never forget.

Yet we were happy to hear our own language again and see one of those stalwart defenders of time and tradition, a London bobby. I was ready to embrace the first once I saw. After officious little French policemen and stolid, rather brutal Germans, it was a relief to meet again a London bobby who always wore the air of a kindly aunt.

Where to live was the first question, and we finally found an enchanting little house in St. John's Wood which had a pocket-handkerchief garden and two trees. With the house and the silver and the furniture we inherited two precious English maids, who made our lives domestically harmonious for the first time in months.

I went to see Constance Smedley immediately, as we had a thousand things to talk about. Her immediate and most pressing interest was a young man named Maxwell Armfield, whom she later married. Since we had left Brävie in Germany while we made this sortie into England, it was up to me to arrange my return appearance in London with as much skill as possible. Constance and I agreed that I must make this return far more impressive than the Aldwych performances.

Mother and I had met a rather strange little man, a Dr. Maddick, who owned and managed a lovely little theater called the Scala, off Tottenham Court Road. It was known as a hoodoo theater, since everything which opened there was a failure. But I was more concerned with its beauty than its superstitions. It was built like a white marble temple and its atmosphere, both in the auditorium and backstage, sustained this first impression.

Mother and Dr. Maddick had long business talks and we finally agreed on terms which would enable us to give a series of smart performances and allow London to see the full range of my dances. We settled a date in October for my opening, and I was able to face a summer of rest with considerable relief.

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Life in St. John's Wood lived itself out in small, delightful ways. I spent much time enjoying the homely peace of a quiet home, a garden, the trees under which I could read book after book, an experience that had been very limited in the last two years. The museums were, of course, an irresistible attraction, and I wandered about them, with no definite objective in mind, touching a hundred cultures, old and new, but especially absorbing the magnificence of the East.

I met several new friends, among them a Miss Jessie Horncastle, who in a short time introduced me to her brother Claude, a serious, intent young metaphysician, who suddenly found himself confronted with the problem of love versus his concept of good conduct. His round, un-English face and dark blue solemn eyes continually held before me the problem I had been so heroically trying to solve. Could one have love without marriage? And was I in any way prepared to divide my life as a dancer with a husband? To Claude love without marriage was unthinkable, but marriage to an itinerant dancer was quite as fantastic.

His moral principle was intense and unequivocal; he could not believe that a spiritual life could encompass human longing. I loved him dearly, and had, within myself, come to some agreement with this ancient problem. Nothing I said, however, cast any light on it for him, and again a romantic idyl blunted itself against this perpetually unresolved problem.

As the summer wore on I found myself more and more weary. I took these ills of my spirit to a Christian Science practitioner, Miss Violet Ker Seymer, who is now one of the editors of the far-flung Christian Science periodicals. I found her a charming, keen, intellectual person, with an intense sympathy for all the travails of the artistic soul. She had a clear and expressive grasp of the power and efficacy of the principle in which she believed. During one of our talks I asked her to tell me a place where I might rest before the Scala opening. She said she knew just the place in South Devonshire, a little hotel called the Carey Arms, overlooking Babbicombe Bay.

It was quiet and lovely, with the cliffs overhanging the sea. I was taken into the bosom of the Pettingill family and was sent out each morning with the warm golden sun slanting over the downs, my knees pressing the good hard earth, to weed the onion patch.

My only visitors were Claude and Jessie; Jessie calm and serene, Claude prepared to resume the ancient battle. But I felt very peaceful and kept him occupied with walks on the downs—I can still see him

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striding along, his head in the air, his eyes fixed on the clouds—or sitting beside the clear blue waters of the bay.

I spent as much as possible of the remaining summer with Constance. When I was near her a thousand new shoots of ideas and plans and emotions began to function. In her presence nothing was impossible. I was able to expound my ideas of the dance as a religious expression, for I was coming to believe that rhythm was not only the basis of all art, but also of all religious worship. One of her major interests was the theater; and as she had at the same time a deep affection for the Bible we talked a great deal about Biblical drama, our interest playing around the figure of Miriam, sister of Moses. Constance encouraged my desire to create a whole cycle of Oriental dances, drawing from the whole of Asia the same distillations I had from India. Stimulated by her, I read books on the Hebrews; I studied Hebrew costumes and musical instruments; I felt the first glimmerings of a little dance.

But toward the beginning of September I had to concentrate all my attention on gathering my Hindus again, and supervising the new temple for *Radha*. She was now to have a shrine, and the temple was to be less the conglomerate collection of Buddhist and Jain architecture that it had been before. The expense was very heavy, and we had little money left for advertising. Consequently we opened very quietly. But the press was enthusiastic, and bit by bit the word began to spread that something unusual was happening at the small tucked-away Scala. But it was not until Constance took charge that our real success began. She describes her inspiration in her own book, and here it is:

She was now appearing at the Scala Theater in her Indian dances but attracting little attention, and the idea came to organize a midnight supper performance under the auspices of the most distinguished leaders of the artistic world. Rodin was her great admirer; I wrote to him explaining the plan and received his immediate consent to serve on the committee. Gradually a committee was arranged of the most influential names in the artistic world, including Bernard Shaw.

This special performance was to be given at midnight, after the regular evening was over. All my life I have loved dancing at special affairs. I feel the release of my spirit from the discipline of the theater hours and conduct. I always feel an air of impromptu joy at being able to dance before a sympathetic audience when there is no question of money. It was at this performance that I tried to provide a surprise for Constance in my first attempt at a Japanese dance. It was in reality only an episode from a hauntingly lovely story by Lafcadio Hearn, under whose spell I had just come. It was called "A Shirabyoshi," or dancing

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girl of ancient Japan. I had very little time to spend on research or choreography, so the effect was fundamentally literary; but as most of the audience had seen the Indian series earlier in the evening, I had a very enthusiastic reception. Afterward supper was served, and I went about among the guests, talking to as many as I could and sincerely grateful that so many artists had come to express their appreciation. Beerbohm Tree was there, and Walter Crane, Sir Laurence Alma-Tadema, and J. M. Barrie; the Shaws, Rodin, Forbes-Robertson, Martin Harvey, Sir Charles Wyndham, Prince Francis of Teck, the Maharajah of Kuch Behar, the Earls of Craven and Dunraven, the Duchess of Manchester, and a good many others.

This evening had the desired effect. The audience increased, and I think I can say quite modestly that everyone but the King and Queen came to the Scala. The cachet was put on me by *Punch*, which immortalized *Radha* in a skit, and picture postcards of my dances began to appear on the streets.

During the Scala engagement Maud Allan was playing to packed houses at the Palace Theater. She played for months, with lines, blocks long, waiting to see her performance.

"And so much for the irony of the world," I thought, when I heard that Isadora Duncan had slipped, practically unheralded, into the small Duke of York Theater where she was giving performances before a sparse audience. In my two years of intensive work I had never had a chance to see her, so I rushed to the theater and bought a ticket.

I will never forget my first impression as the curtain rose. A single amber shaft of light struck the center of the stage. From the shadowy depths of the curtains at the right slipped a small dancing figure, dressed in a Greek tunic. My first impression was a shock of disappointment. She was then a little overweight, her arms hung limply at her sides, her hair was badly dressed as though she had done it hastily. She wore very little make-up, and in profile her face was not especially interesting. She came slowly forward to the center of the stage and, standing in the amber ray of light, began to move. It is difficult to find words with which to pay tribute to the indescribable genius of Isadora. I can only say briefly that she evoked in that pitifully small audience visions of the morning of the world. She was not only the spirit of true Greece in her effortless, exquisitely modulated rhythms, but she was the whole human race moving in that joy and simplicity and childlike harmony that we associate with Fra Angelico's angels dancing "the dance of the redeemed." Mary Fanton Roberts said years afterwards, "Isadora was Dionysiac and Ruth St. Denis Apollon," meaning that



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Isadora possessed the ecstatic liberation of the soul, which I translated into form; and it was some of this ecstatic quality of her soul that I received on this occasion, never to lose as long as I live. In one arm's movement was all the grace of the world, in one backward flinging of her head was all nobility!

Following her first solo came the children. They were then about twelve or thirteen years old, but they burst onto the stage like a flock of pale yellow and pink butterflies with an aimless lyric abandon. One group would sit in the corner of the stage, while two in the shadows would maintain an incessant rhythm without leaving the spot; then another would leap through the group with a quick bacchanal movement that was sheer joy and rapture. I have never seen children dance like that before or since.

Oh, the irony, the irony, I thought as I went out; Maud Allan might dance before kings and receive a good stipend, but neither she nor any of her successors could be more than a faint echo of this pure spirit of the dance.

Years later I read a book called *The Recreating of the Individual*, by Beatrice Hinkle. When I finished her chapter "The Psychology of the Artist" I understood Isadora better than I ever had before. Miss Hinkle describes two artist-types; one the artist who is the willing and often unconscious instrument of some divine element of beauty through which and by which it can manifest itself; and the other the conscious artist, the intellectual, who definitely steers his own course and consciously rays out into time and space the visions of his mind. The first remains, all his life, unmoved by the events of his outer life or by his own temperament. If he is intelligent and disciplined he will be so to the end; if he is childlike and amoral, he will be even less changed. He is unaffected by the phenomena occurring within the confines of his own personality. It is obvious that Isadora belonged to this type. The other artist was, if I remember correctly, inundated by that genius which welled up in his being. He became the student of his own inspiration and the obedient disciple to the master within. With these types clearly in mind, we can perhaps realize with greater love and understanding why Isadora was shaken from time to time by the power that coursed through her, so that her outer life was thrown out of focus and she was unable to set right the overbalanced elements of her life.

I did not have much time to myself during those days at the Scala. But once we gave ourselves a little holiday and went down to Earl's

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Court, which, as every traveler knows, is a combination of Coney Island and Broadway. Fascinating exhibitions appeared there from time to time, and, having heard that an Oriental fair was going on, we started on an interminable bus ride in order to track it down.

After reaching Earl's Court and wandering about a bit we came to a large building which was a sort of arcade with shops on both sides. We were standing in front of a rug booth when suddenly I heard the throb of Arab drums. I began to search about for them, and a merchant pointed to the other end of the walk. I hurried the family along toward the sound of the drums and at last we came to an Arab café. Here was a sanded floor and several little tables. On a raised platform sat half a dozen musicians. They were playing indifferently, bound to get the day's work over. But to me, who had fed myself on the femininity of Indian music, this masculine North African music was irresistible. Mother, sensing what I was about to do, protested feebly. Buzz grew a little embarrassed and strolled away. I kicked off my shoes and threw away my hat and began to dance.

Ten minutes later, when I was again conscious of my surroundings, I found the archways of the café packed with Oriental faces. They had heard the exclamations and calls of the Arab orchestra and had left their jewelry and rugs to join in the hand clapping and shouts of encouragement.

Hearing a new rhythm for the first time is to the dancer what the first encounter of love is to the lover. It can never be quite repeated; never again was I able entirely to recapture the abandon and rhythm of that afternoon.

This whole London period was a strange mingling of success and depression. As an interpretative dancer I was being accepted without question, but the period in which I really lived—that is, the creative—was terribly nonproductive. Every artist knows that there are times of mere living when nothing seems to happen within the deep springs of one's being. The waters are going neither forward nor back, but maintain a dull kind of Sargasso Sea. I have been subject to them many times, and Father used to encourage me by saying, when I moped about the house and complained that everything was at a standstill, "Dearie, if you do not slack the strings of the violin, you cannot tune them up to a fresh pitch." This period was one of those slack times.

We had had several letters from Braffie, and I was greatly cheered to know that I was going back to Germany after the present engagement was over. But it meant reorganizing my company of boys. One of my

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most faithful Hindus was a handsome boy named Rose Mazumdar. He was shy and hesitant, with lovely brown eyes. He had become Mother's stand-by in the endless small details of costume and properties. In the odd times when we had a little leisure for conversation I used to talk to Rose about his home, and he told me of his passionate plans to free his country. I grew very fond of him and trusted him in everything. When I knew that I must have more Hindus to complete my company I asked Rose what to do. It took him only a moment to decide. We would go, he said, to the Great India docks where all the ships from the Orient anchored. Rose told me very frankly that we would be trespassing on the shipping circles' preserves but I put my conscience to rest and we started off.

It is a long hour's drive to the Great India docks, but the sight that greeted my eyes—great ships, a bustling wharf, and countless turbaned sailors—rewarded me for the tedious journey.

Rose left me on the dock leaning up against one of the warehouses while he went aboard one of the ships to reconnoiter. When he finally maneuvered permission to go below, he came back and fetched me. We descended slowly and cautiously into the bowels of the ship, down past ordinary decks to the regions near the boilers which can be reached only by a narrow iron stairway. As we got down into the airless dark compartment where our new boys were supposed to be billeted, we saw lines of bunks and curious, eager black eyes watching us. Word had run swiftly through these lower reaches of the ship that a *memsahib* was going to visit them.

Some were singing, with their drums in their laps. One or two had monkeys which ran chattering up and down the aisles. The smell of curry pervaded everything.

Rose opened up the negotiations in a dialect I could not understand. I never heard so many words in my life. He talked and they talked. They called to one another and sometimes everyone was shouting at once. From time to time they looked up furtively at me standing halfway down the stairs. At last Rose struck a bargain with three boys, who agreed to meet him on the dock the next day.

Now this kidnaping of sailors from a ship is really a dishonest business and I make no bones about it. They were expected, of course, to sign up for the return voyage, and I suppose their delinquency caused the captain all manner of inconvenience; but here was a question of Art over Industry, and in this small battle Art won out.

Rose and I sneaked off the ship and along the wharves before the

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deckmaster, hearing the commotion below, could find out what had happened. The next day Rose brought me three boys, who remained with me for many months, and one of them, Mogul Khan, accompanied us to America.

When the Scala performance closed I found I had established some kind of a record. For the first time a solo dancer had filled a theater and drawn audiences for seven weeks. But I had to announce my closing in November and prepare to leave immediately for Germany.

Braffie had arranged a two months' tour, which would begin in Dresden and end at the Wintergarten in Berlin. It was a rainy evening when we were to take the train to Folkestone, and Mother and Buzz had gone on ahead; but I was indulging in a farewell cry with Claude, who had come to see me off, and reducing myself to a fine state of emotion. We rode round and round Hyde Park and down the dark streets, engaged in an endless and hysterical discussion of our emotional status. Claude murmured something about marriage, and I explained patiently that it would never do. I longed terribly to feel his arms around me, but his conscience forbade anything but the most tepid embrace, and we arrived at the station thwarted and unsatisfied. Claude's big eyes followed me wistfully through the ticket gate and I was red-eyed and uncontrolled, in no mood to face an impatient Buzz, a disapproving Mother clinging like a rock of uncompromising determination to the basket which held my *Radha* crown, and a group of chattering Hindu boys.

The whistle blew and Buzz said, out of the corner of his mouth, "Any time you're ready, Sis . . . make up your mind." I climbed on the train, and my last picture was of Claude's poor white face as he stood against the ugly ticket office.

No one can know how glad I was to return to Germany. She seemed like my foster mother, and I found myself stimulated and eager to dance for her again. Once again I was struck by the extraordinary contrast between England and Germany. One was a fundamentally bourgeois nation, the other essentially aristocratic. Berlin seemed more clean and orderly than any other city I had been in. I was not conscious of the slums as I was in England, nor was I aware of such marked class distinction. Caste, yes, but that was military rather than social.

This military element was a sinister thread weaving its way through the activities of German life. Many a time I stood on the sidewalk with Germans beside me, and watched an officer or group of officers come

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sweeping down and force us into the street. I would always grow wildly indignant, and I think in their hearts many of the simple German people were equally furious, but they were powerless to reveal their resentment. This was 1909, and the demonic spirit of self-will, of world conquest at any cost, of German egotism and pride was being swollen to such a point that it would soon be ready to burst. But the simple art-loving Germans whom I loved and who loved me were no part of this dangerous and inflated national ego.

From my opening in Dresden to my appearance in Berlin I found the same warmth, the same intent absorption in my work which had led the Germans to call me a dance-artist, never a dancer. I saw many of my old friends again, and made many new ones.

In Germany the simple and romantic were always the natural expressions of appreciation. One morning at my *pension* I received an exquisite spray of pale yellow orchids sent in a marvelous Chinese vase. It was accompanied by a little note written in perfect English by a young man named Walter Schuster. He said he had gone eight times to my performance, occupying always the same seat on the front row so that he might miss no detail of my expression. The vision of *Radha* stepping down slowly from her lotus throne had, he said, haunted his dreams and he felt he must, somehow, see her in the flesh.

Something in the letter stirred all the romanticism in me. I felt both desire and yearning between the lines of the letter. I was still smarting from the confusions roused by Claude; I was lonely and unsatisfied. I was in such a receptive mood that I was greatly moved by this little note. At the same time I felt such warning vibrations that I knew if I surrendered, on any terms, to this strong and subtle call I would endanger that whole quality of my art which I had been protecting so zealously.

My answering note was couched in reserved and polite phrases. I indicated that I was very busy and felt it better for him to preserve his present illusions. But I suppose, being a woman, I added a hopeful word that perhaps, in a vague future, we might meet.

On the next day he sent another spray of orchids, which leaned from its vase in a line that the Japanese would have admired.

A note came with it, a note without salutation, brief and poignant. "Last night I left the theater and went home and played on the piano for hours before I could sleep. Your brown hands moving in the incense haunt me."

Each day for a month he sent orchids, and each day he sent a note.

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The sight of the notes inexplicably set me trembling. "Yesterday afternoon I walked alone in the Tiergarten. Since I have seen you at the Wintergarten the color of the leaves has changed, the sky is different." As the month drew toward a close the notes became more insistent. "I must see you. I must see you." I could no longer resist his pleadings and yet a strange resistance was set up in me. Such a wild stirring of subtle suggestion possessed me, such deep calls to the profoundly sensuous, hedonistic qualities of my nature, which no amount of metaphysics could dissipate, that I trembled, wondering whether I should see this man or not. But, of course, I agreed. It would have been impossible to go on any longer receiving his letters and his flowers without some personal communication.

We sat opposite each other in the little *pension* drawing room. He was tall and slender, with dark hair and the intense dark eyes of a highly nervous person. A profound current of emotional tension lay between us. He kept repeating, "But I did not know—your hair—your eyes . . ." He was trying to struggle out of his absorption in *Radha* and relate this white-haired, plainly dressed girl to her. We sat very still, not saying a word; such a profound psychic disturbance set up that my brain could not grasp it, and I preferred to remain absolutely quiet. In very halting English he explained that when I received a note marked "Four o'clock in the morning" I was to understand that he had sat up all night with an English dictionary and a German dictionary, piecing out the phrases that were to convey his thoughts to me. I was disturbed and irresistibly attracted. This man invaded my deepest impulses of pleasure and sensuous delight, and I was frightened.

His departure did nothing to dull these disturbances. Everything that I sensed in him stirred the ancient conflict, love versus art, and religion against all things.

I realized in a vague, dimly formed way that it was only the interpretative artists who were fed and developed by emotional experiences. To me, who was essentially a creator, these experiences were profoundly and terrifyingly disturbing. They threatened my sanctuary! They set up such conflicts between the biologic woman, who I was, whether I chose to acknowledge it or not, and the artist woman who drank from deeper springs than the language of the body could identify. Brävie once said to me, "No, Rutie, you must not marry, because what you now give to your dancing you will give to your husband." I knew with a terrible inward agony that his words were true. The quality of my ideas and the manifestation of those ideas could not be driven into any

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experience that called for great intensity of emotion. And yet even this conflict found its way into some of my dances. The mystical quality of a curiously spiritual and yet curiously sexual consciousness was the very essence of many of my later dances. As Hugo had said, I both attracted and repelled. I attracted impersonal admiration and understanding, and I repelled all that bordered on the personal. Walter, by his letters and his presence, had revealed that disturbing quality of intense aestheticism which by a slight movement could be changed into passionate desire.

His letters and his importunities continued. I resisted as long as I could, knowing that the attraction he exerted over me was almost sinister in its persuasiveness. But when he asked me to come to his studio one afternoon, I agreed.

Mother was outspoken in her objections, but I drove off in a barouche, because now that I had determined to go, nothing could hold me back.

The windows of his studio were high and looked over a park. A grand piano stood in one corner of the room, with huge white flowers in a vase standing near it. The room was lined with books and a long mirror hung between the windows.

He took my hat and gloves and led me to one of the big chairs and put a cushion at my feet. He held my hands a moment in tremulous uncertainty, looking at me for a long time, trying apparently to fuse the goddess of the mysterious blue light of the temple with this slightly frightened American girl.

He finally went to the bookcase and handed me a book with some lovely illustrations of India. "These are very good. Do you not think so?" he said quietly. Then he went quickly to the piano and sat down to play. The twilight deepened. He played Beethoven and Bach as only a German can play them. I leaned back in the chair and closed my eyes, conscious that I was living through one of those rarely beautiful hours that are given to us all too seldom.

He filled the room with the longing of the love desire, transmuted through the heart of those composers. At the end there was silence, and then he rushed forward and knelt by my side, burying his face in my palms, and we sat thus, fused by the solvent of exquisite music.

When I left that afternoon I refused to see him again. His attraction for me was so deeply disturbing that I knew I would never be satisfied to have him revolve around the outer rim of my life, but would, through the force of his charm, submit to his invasion of my sanctuary.

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His intense aestheticism was indistinguishable from the element of desire. I saw us both merely as symbols, as states of mind, our whole capacity for beauty suddenly focused in an individual.

I knew then, as I know now, that in all potential love relationships we are merely, in the words of Emerson, seeking for and responding to qualities rather than persons. Our own appetite for sensation, for the realization of beauty and ecstasy is constantly seeking for that outer challenge which will arouse to fullest expression those hidden elements within ourselves. Walter brought all this into irresistible focus and, since I was so much of an aesthete myself, I could never be roused to a pitch of desire except by certain qualities of intelligence or charm or beauty in a man. Walter was not only handsome and charming to a degree, but he breathed out that high culture of German life which represented the epitome of artistic thought to me.

I stayed in Germany for two months. At the end of the tour I gave a command performance at the Royal Theater at Weimar. The Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha asked me to dance for his guests, who represented the cream of the gold braid and titles of Germany. The next day I was unexpectedly asked to attend a luncheon on an upper floor of the Schiller Theater. The room was large, beautifully furnished, and overlooked the tops of the trees. Mother and Buzz had also been asked, because these artists and businessmen who surrounded the table had something of great importance to tell me.

They wished to build a theater in my honor.

As artists and purveyors of German culture, they recognized the advancing tide of the dance. Through my concern with the Orient, its philosophy and color, I had enlarged the horizons of the dance; I had brought new qualities of movement and new feeling. They felt that a fresh art had come to their artistic shores—an art which had proved that it could pay for itself. To build a theater for me would provide not only a focal point for new ideas relating to the dance, such as music, painting, sculpture, but it would be a sound financial investment as well. The only stipulation they would make was that I remain in Germany for five years.

I had to refuse. It cost me much distress, for I realized that the offer was both a symbol and an actual expression of the seriousness and valuation which the Germans attached to my work. I knew that to have a theater of my own would mean the release of all the dreams I had been building. I would have been able to develop the ritual dramas



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that were forming in my thoughts. I would have a sense of security. But underneath all my interests in other cultures and other races I was intensely patriotic and I felt that whatever value my life had should be developed and spent in America. And I knew that if my spiritual home were in Germany I would never be able to tear up my roots and return to America.

But the offer was a supreme climax to my wonderful days in Germany. It symbolized all that I loved and clung to in the German spirit, and all that had fed and nourished me for those two years and a half. My ties with the Germany of art and beauty are indissoluble.

In April and June I was to play at the Coliseum, the largest variety house in London. The engagement was purely commercial. I needed money, and I have always been a good employee. My long and distinguished engagement at the Scala had not proved a financial success. My expenses were mounting, as they always do in any career showing signs of success; and when Mr. Stoll of the Coliseum offered me a contract I accepted gladly, since it would give me an opportunity to show my dances to a much larger public.

I really enjoyed the two performances a day, and the management did everything in their power to make me happy. In those days the performances of *Radha* affected people in different ways. Some, of course, regarded it as a superficial, exotic novelty and gradually lost whatever impression it may have made upon them. Others, whose temperaments were more responsive, received an image which many years later was still intensely vivid. Since my impression of Mrs. Stebbens is as vivid today as it was when I first saw her, I can well credit the impression that *Radha* sometimes made. A few people were quieted and comforted by the dance, and unconsciously derived some measure of the Nirvanic calm which *Radha* brought to her devotees. Certain people who were receptive to this calm felt a curious benediction from the performance.

One afternoon when I came back from my customary ride in Hyde Park, which I always took between the afternoon and evening performances, I opened my dressing-room door to find, standing with his back to my dressing table, a tall dark man of distinguished appearance. Someone had been bribed, as I learned later through my irate brother, to admit him to my dressing room.

I stood irresolute and amazed. He was a perfect stranger, and yet as he advanced to meet me with both hands outstretched I, too, took a step toward him. He kissed my hands, and said, "I had to come. Forgive me."

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It all happened so swiftly and with such an air of reasonableness that I found myself sitting down as he leaned against the wall opposite and began to talk.

He told me that his name was Count P——, an Italian. His wife had died the year before, and he had wandered about London, lonely and disconsolate. He found he could not follow the usual paths of dissipation, and had in sheer ennui and grief wandered into the Coliseum. But when the curtain rose on *Radha* something happened to him. For the first time in months his attention became focused on something which gave him happiness. He had returned many times until he reached the point where he, like Walter, felt he must meet the woman behind the artist.

He appeared to be in such deadly earnest that I listened with fixed attention to the end of his story. Then he said, very slowly, "But you are not like your goddess. You are beautiful in your own way, and you must let me come and see you."

As he took a step toward me I suddenly realized, half in amusement and half in fright, what was happening. Though I confessed to being moved by his story, I assured him this was not the way I went about matters of love.

I told him further that he had no right to come into my dressing room and that I would make no promises to see him again. He seemed very dejected but my experience with the confusions and distresses of Walter would not allow me to respond to this stranger, and when he went away that evening I made sure I would not hear from him again.

During this spring I met Cyril Scott, the composer, again, and he suggested a delightful adventure. We would go to Surrey to see Swami Paramananada. On a lovely soft spring day Constance and he and I got into a roomy old London taxi and lumbered down through the outskirts of the city ■ a little cottage with a garden, and here I met one of the finest spirits among the Indian teachers.

The Swami was holding small classes for students of Hindu philosophy. I was struck by his extreme and beautiful simplicity. He was then a young man of about twenty-five, tall and handsome, with a brown skin of that soft mellow color that is so beautiful under the saffron turban of a teacher. His voice was very soft and quiet, and he had what few Hindus possessed, a sense of humor.

He prepared our meal, a vegetable luncheon, with his own hands. The Swami represented to me at that time a new personality in the realm of my East Indian acquaintance. I had met a number of fake

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Yogi, trading upon women's leisure and curiosity. One or two of the younger intellectuals had crossed my path, but until now I had not met what Tantine calls "an authentic Swami," one whose evident sincerity of purpose and luminosity of mind revealed itself at once. This meeting with him was to prove the beginning of a liberal spiritual education, which later included friendships with many of those disciples of the great Ramakrishna who are bringing out into the world the unsullied truths of the ancient Hindu scriptures.

In *Radha* I had tried to communicate something of this, but *Radha* was not to be the total of what I called the tremendous active stillness of Oriental art and philosophy. I wanted to be able to reach out in any direction and utilize whatever coloring expressed the wonder and beauty that was being continually engendered in my own spirit. My thoughts turned again to *Egypta*. In the back of my mind was the hope that Harris would allow me to produce it when I came home. I spent long hours of thought upon it and haunted the South Kensington Museum whenever I was free.

When the question of music came up I conceived of twelve different composers setting to music the twelve hours of the day of Egypt, for I wanted as much variety as possible to signify the rise and fall of Egypt. An English musical patron, whose name escapes me, offered to negotiate with a number of English composers. We even went so far as to settle on the price of each composition, and one of the young composers, Gustave Holst, then practically unknown, agreed to the undertaking. Unfortunately the project fell through, but years later I danced my *Prophetess* to the superb music of Holst's *The Planets* with the New York Philharmonic.

Sir Beerbohm Tree, hearing of my interest in and knowledge of Egypt, asked me if I would be good enough to come to His Majesty's Theater to discuss matters concerning an Egyptian ballet for a forthcoming production in which he was greatly interested.

He was a charming, scholarly man, with graciousness of manner and profound erudition. I was much intrigued by his Egyptian play, which told the story of a religious reformer who appeared during one of the early dynasties. Although he acknowledged that the play would probably not succeed he was anxious to make it as authentic as possible. He wanted to know how one could create an illusion of the ancient rhythms of Egypt with modern dancers in a modern ballet. I could only give him my method of reconstruction, which I used in all my studies for the dance. This method was always the same: to get a thorough image in my mind from paintings, photographs, sculpture, and descrip-

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tions in archeological books or histories of the geometric designs used by ancient dancers; then from the musical instruments pictured in the wall paintings deduce as nearly as possible the intervals of the rhythms employed. I explained this to Sir Beerbohm, and he seemed sufficiently impressed to say that he thought he could solve his problem in the same way.

After my engagement at the Coliseum I was sent on a circuit of vaudeville houses, which brought me finally to Scotland. But the tour was, on the whole, so hilariously unlike anything I had ever experienced before that I finally called it off.

The theater in Edinburgh where the tour ended was presided over by a manager who was the fifth or sixth who had been sent by the home office in as many months. His predecessors' downfalls were always precipitated by the three-penny gallery which made a practice of getting out of hand. When an act pleased their fancy they shouted encouragingly, "I say there, Hettie, give us a little more leg on that number!" or "Tommie, you're doing grand. Give us another chorus"—this encouragement delivered in throaty Scotch, strongly mixed with whisky. But heaven help the luckless act that met with their disapproval.

The manager was quite properly apprehensive about *Radha*. When the curtain rose, Mother and Buzz and he stood in the wings tense with excitement. I, on my throne, was quite as tense and apprehensive, but for a moment there was a kind of stunned silence. This was a new one, and it took the gallery several minutes to gather their Scotch wits together. They leaned forward with their chins on the gallery rail. They nudged certain inattentive ones who were gossiping with their neighbors and paying no attention to the stage.

But finally, out of the midst of this silence, came a lusty voice, appealing almost pathetically to his fellows, "I say, boys, what's it all abaht!"

This broke up the meeting. The audience shouted and the manager brought down the curtain. I did not know whether to laugh or cry, and for a few minutes confusion reigned backstage and in the audience. The manager came to my dressing room, where I was walking up and down, and begged me not to let these hoodlums win out.

I felt sorry for the man, who was in danger of losing his job, and my dander was up. When Buzz said, "They're not going to hurt you, and there are people in that audience who want to see you dance. You mustn't let those Scotch bums win out," I agreed to finish the week. But when I was offered another week in Glasgow I politely refused. I had had enough of the provinces.

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Underneath these English days my terrible energy was accumulating. The constant traveling and in some ways the greater artistic stimulation of Germany was over for the time. I loved my English friends but, with the exception of Constance, I could not talk to them about the form I wished my future work to take.

I began to think very earnestly of home. Letters from Harris indicated that he thought I should not stay away too long. I was eager for new fields of creative work.

I had thought very little of the farm and Somerville while I was in Europe. They had receded into a somewhat sentimental haze; but now that I turned my thoughts homeward it came to me that the little country girl of the field and hills of the farm, who had danced her way through the capitals of Europe—for kings and dukes and princesses—who had been written about by some of the most penetrating minds in Europe, was after all an American. I wanted to bring my laurels to my own country. I wanted to bring my consciousness of art and my hopes of beauty to the one country whose appreciation I most desired.



**CHAPTER VIII: Lessons in Pioneering:** WHEN we turned our faces homeward, there was the sweet feeling of coming to our own environment again, and I am sure we embarked eagerly enough. Yet when we landed and got through the customs and found ourselves packed into a taxi riding uptown through the familiar streets, a feeling of immense distaste came over me. Paradoxically, I was coming home to an alien civilization; that mellow richness of life which I had felt in England had unfitted me for the metallic rush and roar of New York. In my little journal I wrote on October 9, 1909:

How calm and serene old London seems now that we are back in New York after three years. I cannot realize it. What do we cling to when all things change? Surely love.

I had returned to America, full of love for her, determined to bring the best of my art; so I refused to be put off by any psychic difference between hurrying, moneymaking America, and the calmer, more aesthetic Europe. I saw Harris immediately, and he began to talk about a series of matinees; but we could not plan anything definitely until I had found a place to live, and had the domestic ends of my life settled.

Mother and I had been feeling badly about Father's lonely and homeless state, carrying on as best he could in furnished rooms while we were abroad. I, too, felt that both Mother and Father should have some sense of security, and not be compelled to live the highly paced life I had chosen. I had brought back from London about ten thousand dollars; and so we decided to buy a place at Prince's Bay, Staten Island. Father's son, my half-brother, Tom, and his wife, our dearly beloved Josie, had settled on the island and begun to raise a family: Leon, who is now a captain in the army; Milton, the slow-moving boy with the lovely smile; Thomas, the belligerent youngest; and Marion, now a successful business girl. Since he and Father were very companionable, both being of an inventive turn of mind, I was glad that we had chosen a place which would give Father a chance to sink his roots into the ground, as once more a feeling of permanence united the family.

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Our little white house was set among some elms, with three acres to make us feel like landed gentry. Our furniture, which Mother had somehow kept together all these years, was spread through the comfortable rooms, and we felt that we had at last found a family base from which we could operate indefinitely.

We had a little garden, and Mother had a few chickens—a faint echo of the beloved farm. Buzz acquired his first automobile, which cost, I believe, fifteen dollars, and was loved devotedly even though it had no chassis. Buzz by now had grown into a self-reliant boy, still devoted to me and my work, but developing inwardly along his own lines. Reticent by nature, he rarely took any of us into his confidence about his hopes or struggles.

We had great respect for each other's peculiarities and weaknesses, and helped each other out of our individual scrapes with no questions asked. His unfailing sense of humor had sustained us during many a family disagreement. Between us has always existed a most subtle and exquisite sympathy and a robust and enduring companionship. Whatever pride he may have expended upon me in the time of the European triumphs, I could now begin to return with interest.

Father, of course, was happy to have a *piéd à terre*, but he was growing more restless and unhappy all the time. His whole life seemed to him a tragic failure. Although Mother did not reproach him for his lack of success, he could not forget that none of his inventions had ever been manufactured or sold properly, with the possible exception of a simple but effective device for whistle communication between the bridge of a big gunboat and the various parts of the ship, finished during the time he worked in the Navy Yard. I do not think he got any money or recognition for this, but for the time he was comforted to feel that he had had even this partial success.

He was still convinced that flying could be made practicable, and spent much time over plans and drawings, which would, I imagine, have been very valuable had he possessed that same gift his daughter lacked, organization.

I think the house on Staten Island made him happy, although his intermittent jobs kept him going and coming. But the very nature of all our lives left us restless. Periodic agonies of creation would overwhelm me; never was I to lead the life of a normal woman. Always the tremendous fire that burned in me would keep me wandering from place to place, and this little house on Staten Island represented merely a shelter to which I could return when the really demanding things of my life were temporarily satisfied.

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Hardly had we settled in the new home before I realized that I could not make the long trip from the tip of the island to New York each day. I needed a studio in New York, as Harris was planning to present me in a series of matinees in November and every waking moment was spent preparing for them. We finally rented the lower part of one of the old houses on Fifty-seventh Street.

Our matinees began on November 16. I was tremendously excited at appearing before American audiences again. I gave my full Indian series, which by now assumed a definite continuity in my mind; first the *Incense*, then the *Cobra*, next the *Nautch* and the *Yogi*, and, last, *Radha*. I wondered how I would be received after three years' absence, but my pressbooks show that this series of matinees, which later included evening performances as well, marked, in many ways, the high point of my solo career in America. Not only were the matinees crowded, but it sometimes seemed as though the whole of New York had suddenly awakened to the fact that it was their American Ruth St. Denis who had made a tremendous sensation abroad and had now come home. Not only my old friends, but many new ones came backstage; many writers interviewed me, and the foundations for my long work in America were established, lovingly and in true devotion.

While there was a decided intellectual and psychic letdown after the spontaneous and understanding admiration of Germany and the discriminating appreciation of England, nevertheless I realized that America was prepared to grasp what I was expressing in a much more sensitive way than I had expected. Not only did friends give me a great warmth of approval, but the writers of that period were extraordinarily receptive to these dances which sprang from the deepest wellsprings of my being and from the heart and soul of profound spiritual teachings.

Charles Collins, writing a month or so later in the *Chicago Inter-ocean*, said:

It is as ■ some soul strayed from Vishnu-land were having its avatar. Here is an inspiration for artists and poets and dreamers. In these visualizations of Hindu glamour all the aesthetic senses may revel, may find a refinement of pleasure that is exotic without a trace of decadence.

And Percy Hammond believed that

Miss St. Denis is as much a magician as the most subtle Indian fakir. Her technical skill conceals itself in her temperament, for she uses her temperament to express the mystic things of the mysterious East.



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Naturally I was very eager to know the status of the dance in America at this time. In Europe I had found a slow gradual acceptance of the dance as an art. Had America reached this point?

During the first season in New York I found a partial answer. Within the space of a few weeks Isadora danced with the Damrosch orchestra; Loie Fuller brought her ballet of girls to the Metropolitan; Adelina Genée, the superb ballerina who vied with Pavlova for honors as premiere danseuse, appeared at the New Amsterdam Theater. The popular Mlle. Dazie was in vaudeville, and very soon the incomparable Pavlova was to appear at the Metropolitan, and Maud Allan was to dance at Symphony Hall in Boston. None of this could have happened ten years before, nor, I venture to believe, even three years before.

The matinees lasted for several weeks, and the demand to see the dances was great enough to cause Harris to arrange evening performances as well. He was delighted with the success and immediately planned a tour to extend as far as Chicago.

I was by now trailing clouds of glory. I had danced before kings and princesses, and duchesses had given me luncheons; Paris and London had acclaimed me—so my publicity man was very happily equipped with plenty of material. All of which was gratifying to Harris and pleasing to the vanity of the family, my own capacity for absorbing prestige and praise being considerable. Nevertheless the place in my mind where I really lived was terribly concerned with what was going to take form from the thousand plans and dreams and inspirations that were swirling about inside me. *Egypta* was still in the forefront of my mind. I reminded Harris about *Egypta* and nagged him a little, but at that time he would give me no encouragement. He knew what a new production was going to cost, and wisely felt that I should build up a following, for he knew as well as I that I had to create my own audiences.

The first engagement was in Chicago. Just before I left New York I received a wire from Mrs. Potter Palmer, whom I had met briefly in London, asking if I would dance at the large Chicago Charity Ball to be given on the fifteenth of December. I accepted immediately, glad not only to dance for charity, but knowing the value of Mrs. Palmer's name, just as I had known the value of the Duchess of Manchester's name in London, and the Baronne de Rothschild's in Paris.

Mrs. Palmer was a charming and vivid woman, the acknowledged leader of Chicago society. This brilliant function, given every winter, was the highlight of her social supremacy.

I was asked to do my *Cobra* and *Nautch*, and I presented them pri-

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vately to the Ball Committee, since they were faintly apprehensive about the degree of bodily exposure. Mrs. Palmer went out of her way to be charming to me, gave a dinner and a reception, and brought many friends to my opening at the Colonial Theater.

The Ball itself was in all the tradition of sumptuousness that these prewar days afforded. All the tiaras and diamonds of Chicago appeared for the occasion. General Frederick Dent Grant, the brother-in-law of Mrs. Palmer and the son of President Grant, came in the resplendency of his uniform and brought his staff with him. The newspapers were wild with delight over the glory of the occasion, and insisted that twenty thousand people attended.

Exactly at midnight the lights were lowered, a trumpet was blown, and the dancers fell back like waves to the sides of the ballroom. A brilliant white spotlight was trained on an entrance far at the end of the room, and there a palanquin appeared, borne by four Hindus, and on it sat the Nautch dancer in all the splendor of her voluminous skirt of white and silver. We made a slow procession around the room, followed by the Indian musicians, salaaming at all the boxes and moving on to a continuous burst of applause. At last the palanquin was set down in the middle of the room, and to the sound of clanking bracelets and ankle bells the Nautch girl entertained these American potentates who shone almost as brightly with jewels as their Indian counterparts. Many a Nautch girl in India had, in the palace of a rajah, gazed about her at a scene not unlike this, save that her audience, with its jewels and silks and velvets, would have been of men, and that the pierced screens of the purdah would have kept from her sight the exquisitely clad women of the zanana. The lights, of course, in the whole ballroom were lowered, so that the eyes fell upon the figure of a dancing girl, beating out the rhythmic measures of an Indian tune in an alien land.

The engagement in Chicago was a very happy one. Not only did the Ball cast a glow, but the critical reception of these reviewers who had never seen the Temple dance before was profoundly encouraging.

Boston, where I went next, proved an equally friendly city, one to which I went back time and again. Philip Hale, then writing on the *Sunday Herald*, struck an intensely understanding note, and his critique remains one of the most sensitive and penetrating I have ever received.

The ensemble of her body is as a flawless lyric. And there is this to be said that to some may be paradoxical: although her body is that of a woman,

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divinely planned, there is no atmosphere of sex about her. Here is a woman who could dance wholly undraped and be the incarnation of unconscious purity. And yet her beauty is not a sexless beauty.

Miss St. Denis has never been in the east. Perhaps for this reason her art ■ the more Oriental, for the imaginative one, dreaming at home, is the most observing and receptive traveller. There is a spirit in this creative girl that saves her individuality from being tampered with by lesser minds.

Such critiques as this released me from the fear that what I wished to express would only be classed as "oriental dancing." Every time I danced before an audience I wished to say through my body that man, in all his arts and spiritual perception, must be worshipping the godhead, whatever name He may be called, Jehovah, Brahma, Allah. The few who perceived this only made me reach the farther to touch all those who came for entertainment and went away merely entertained.

While I was here I met the sculptor Gaston Lechaise. In these days he was a fascinating French boy, newly arrived in America, and he made some delightful studies of me in the *Cobra* and the *Incense*, little figurines that were full of character. I have often wondered, when I saw his huge, unwieldy figures later, what came over his spirit; for at this time he seemed to accept nature and the other arts as he found them, and could with delicacy and strength transmute into living sculpture the characteristic element of a person or an animal. After many years, when I saw his work again it seemed to me that some strange blight had come over his soul, and that he was trying to compensate himself for something rather than let the clear stream of his genius use him.

This first tour took in Philadelphia, where I danced for the Wideners; Washington, where Mrs. Barney entertained again for me, and Mrs. Marshall Field gave a reception for the French and Russian ambassadors and asked me to dance. I toured all that winter, returning to Philadelphia, going to Baltimore, which has always been intensely loyal, reaching Denver in March where, I was to learn three years later, an eager and intense young man named Ted Shawn "found" himself "sobbing as ■ the soul rose out of my body when I saw the *Incense*—and never before or since have I known so true a religious experience or so poignantly a revelation of perfect beauty."

I believe that in those beautiful words Ted set the keynote of appreciation for that small group of sensitive individuals who were to be found in all my audiences. That curious childlike yielding to in-

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spiration which is so inherently and deeply a part of a young nation ran like a thread through these crowded audiences, drawn from the various strata of our cultural life. Of course, to some these exotic scenes were simply funny, to others they were merely a novelty, but to a small, precious minority they were the open gate to a new order of beauty, an intuitive experience unlike the run of their common days. To the dwellers on the plains of Kansas or the mountains of Colorado or the hills of Illinois a revelation of different times and different places came into the orbit of their lives in a way they had never experienced before.

The fact that, of the five Indian dances, it was the *Yogi* which in a subtle and distinctive way was the favorite indicates that this dance, which was not a dance but an effort at a superconsciousness, established a kind of touchstone to all that I tried to express.

When I reached Cleveland in April, on my way back to New York, I had a letter from Harris, saying that he had at last decided to do *Egypta*.

I was both thrilled and appalled. Much of the research pursued both in London and at home lay in unrelated areas in my mind; but there were a hundred problems to be solved, not in the leisurely two years that *Radha* had taken, but in six weeks. Some of the white flame of my enthusiasm for *Egypta* had been subdued. The basic theme still delighted me, however, as a study of the symbolic body of complete man manifesting itself through the multiple energies of a nation, and I still think it something of a minor tragedy that I did not do it when I first held this vivid conception.

I had conceived it in Buffalo as a one-act solo-dance drama, probably lasting not more than forty minutes. But now Harris naturally wanted a full evening's entertainment. The various episodes had to be split up into scenes, each scene to be complete in itself and yet present a harmonious whole. I began at once to readjust myself and as soon as the visions of what could be done seized hold on me—alas, for Harris—I began to spend money.

Harris was generous beyond belief and I never stopped to inquire whether my expenditures were too excessive. Memories of my interview with Beerbohm Tree and his marvelous temple set rose in my mind. I must have one like it. By now I heard voices chanting the old hymns of the Nile. I must have a vast desert scene, a cyclorama which cost five hundred dollars. I must have courtiers and soldiers and peasants—and the wig bill alone cost six hundred dollars. I am sure

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Harris must have wondered if he were not making the supreme blunder of his life, but he never complained.

An odd assortment of dancers, knowing nothing and caring less about Egyptian banquets than I care about the Choctaws, had to be assembled and disciplined into an Egyptian ballet which used flat, two-dimensional movements. Square tambourines had to be made, and music composed. This Walter Meyrowitz provided brilliantly in a subtle and beautiful score which suited the hieroglyphic movements of the dancers. Each episode had its complete scene, properties, and music—to say nothing, as in the case of *The Dance of Day*, of an elaborate lighting system which Buzz designed.

The whole effect, when it burst upon the astonished eyes of the public on December 10, 1910, was that of an opera which was danced rather than sung. Every color, every device of stagecraft, had been utilized to astound the gaze and recreate the glories of a civilization which had endured in all its material and spiritual glory for four thousand years.

The first dance was the *Veil of Isis*, a temple dance in which I again impersonated a goddess.

In contrast to this was the *Palace* scene, full of color, and movement. It dramatized an ancient feast, with the King and Queen entertaining their nobles with play and feasting, to which the chief dancer contributed a spirited bit.

The next scene was the nearest in design to the central idea of my old *Egypta*. I called it *The Dance of Day*. At the rise of the curtain one saw a sleeping figure in a coarse peasant dress lying on a slab. She typified in quality the same abstract figure of Egypt that my little poster did so long ago, and in her actions she told the tale of Egypt's rise and fall.

In my last scene, I was concerned with the Egyptian beliefs regarding immortality. This had been my great interest from the first moment I looked at the old poster. Egypt made her confession to the Forty-two Assessors, and when the feather of truth balanced her heart she was free to enter the Elysian fields.

This Egyptian series was outweighed with people and scenery and was much too expensive for that period, yet it definitely added one more link in my chain of Eastern rituals. In my six Egyptian dancers, with their square tambourines moving in two-dimensional hieratic movements, was laid the first faint outlines of an American ballet.

The pressbook which indicated the reception *Egypta* received was burned years later, so I have no means of knowing what the reception

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was. I know that we had sold-out houses at the Amsterdam and played a full schedule of three weeks, which was an experience a solo dancer had not had before. But I know that the expenses were staggering and that my conscience began bothering me very much. In January, 1911, we went to Boston where we also had large audiences, and then I suggested to Harris that we arrange a long tour which would help recoup some of the expenses. We made up a combination program of the more popular numbers from *Egypta* and *Radha*, and Harris booked us to the West.

The tour was, on the whole, a genuine success. I had, in a large sense, been forced to create my own audiences on my first tour, and I found them waiting when I returned. However, I cannot take too much credit, for in 1910 and 1911 any "show" that looked at all promising was avidly seized upon by theater-loving people. The movies had not yet assumed their major powers of attraction, and the public was prepared to support any entertainment which provided them with a certain standard of excellence.

The quality of the audiences in our small cities was in no way comparable to the intellectual enthusiasm of an audience in Düsseldorf, for instance. However, from city to city those hungry souls who had been waiting for some gesture of beauty would unfailingly come backstage. They seized with joy upon the Oriental scenes, and many friends, lasting over the years, grew out of these dressing-room acquaintances. Yet I must admit that the marvelous atmosphere of challenge which I had grown to depend upon abroad was not here.

It took many years to realize the full effect of the pioneering work done on these journeys. I have been told by Hindus that the value of these early tours, when their Hindu culture was introduced through the dance, can scarcely be overestimated. Until the appearance of *Radha* our national conception of Oriental dancing brought images of the Midway Plaisance at the Chicago Fair, which was not discussed in polite society. And in literature the Oriental, be he Indian, Japanese, Chinese, was, as a general rule, the villain of the piece. We were not only crude but vicious in our attitudes toward the Orient, and with infinite gratitude I can say very humbly that I believe these early dances of mine helped to lay the groundwork for a better appreciation of Eastern culture and beauty. The rhythms, the costuming, and the constant suggestions of Oriental philosophy, implicit in the performance, caused discussions and research that have subtly penetrated the whole of America.

For seven years now I had given all my dreams and labors to these

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temple dances. I had made a great deal of money and found success. But I was acutely aware of a not infrequent misconception of what I was attempting to do. To many professional or self-styled critics I was using high-sounding religious or metaphysical terms merely to decorate an ordinary aesthetic idea; I was an honest if self-deluded girl, with what H. C. Wells calls a "messianic complex."

It is curiously true that no one, throughout my entire career, has been analytic enough to see this point. Seldom has any critic penetrated deeply enough from a philosophic point of view to determine whether I was, indeed, an embodiment in living flesh and blood of a spiritual realization, or merely a resourceful dancer using picturesque names to label an ordinary aesthetic urge. I have been shocked and alarmed when I realized all too clearly that I was producing these religious dances in the theaters of the world and getting paid for it. But as I have said before, I had not then made a complete design of this new form of religious expression. I had gotten only as far as the personal expression, but it really had not occurred to me to try to battle my way to the building of a theater-temple in which not only my own conceptions but others of similar inspiration could be adequately produced and protected. At that time Isadora and I, and others who had forsworn the orthodoxies of the ballet, were busy waging our war to make America accept dancing as an art. To compel it to accept the dance as an instrument of worship was something still to come.

Since dance critics did not exist in those days, those of us who were pioneering had to create our own language as well as our audience. We had to break the ground, teach the alphabet of appreciation, produce the dances, and persuade the audience that what we were expressing was a vital and necessary part of our national culture.

These long tours were a constant repetition of endless rehearsals, endless performances, endless one-night stands, and endless struggles with the local reporters, who had to be coached into a semblance of dance appreciation.

This dance reporter was usually a nondescript, tall male with a hesitating what-am-I-doing-here expression on his face. One had first been taken by a friend to see Ruth St. Denis do her Oriental dances under the mistaken impression that it was going to be a "hot" evening. However, he stuck it out and retained an impression of an active brown-skinned damsel with a nice length of limb, glossy black hair, and pretty, telling black eyes.

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Waiting for his interview in the half light of the early morning mezzanine the reporter is faced by a white-haired girl with no make-up on and a dark gown which any typist might wear. He grows a little uncertain and says, "Excuse me, but *are* you Ruth Denis?" This is an old story, so I reassure him promptly.

Then he tries again. "You know, by rights I hadn't ought to be here. Our Dramatic Department was sent out of town to review a play and I'm the Sports reporter. Last night I was at the Big Fight, so I'm not quite clear this morning what they want me to get."

I continue to look hopeful, not knowing exactly how to get the Big Fight tied up with *Egypta*, and he finally says desperately, in a burst of inspiration, "Well, maybe you'd give me a little dope on your life? . . . And, say, what do you think—should college girls shimmy when they do the tango?"

He leaves in a very little while, a good deal more perspiring than when he came, but that was not my last meeting with his kith and kin. Many of his spiritual brothers haunted my early mornings throughout the country, and the experience was an exhausting one for all of us.

The tour carried me as far as California. Shortly before I reached San Francisco a man and his wife came to my dressing room and introduced themselves as Mr. and Mrs. Frank Havens. The name meant very little to me at the time, but hearing Mrs. Haven talk I knew she had a deep understanding of the East and was quite a Buddhist scholar. I soon learned that they were wealthy people, Mr. Havens being a genial, friendly man, prominent in real estate in Piedmont, California. They had just completed a home there, which was entirely East Indian. They had not seen my performance, since they had stopped by hurriedly on their way to California, but friends had told them about *Radha* and the Indian series, and they were very anxious that I dedicate their house.

I accepted gladly, and they moved forward the day of dedication to coincide with my San Francisco engagement. It was a thrilling and unique experience. I am sure no home in India could have been more beautiful than this house they had created. Mrs. Havens, with consummate taste, had incorporated all the ornate, intricate, and mysteriously fascinating ornamentation of Indian art and architecture, while at the same time preserving a remarkable simplicity. In her living room was a large niche, which was intended to hold a seated Buddha. She had not yet found the one she wished, and as soon as I entered the room she and I saw at once that *Radha* would occupy the niche as though it had been designed for her.



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To this housewarming she had invited all of artistic and social San Francisco and Oakland. When everyone was assembled I entered the room dressed in my smoke-gray sari, bearing the incense tray in my hand, and as I slowly came down the long room I sprinkled the incense on the charcoal, and a pungent perfume spread throughout the house. In this way, to the devotional fumes of the incense, was the house dedicated.

A little later screens were pulled slowly apart and Radha was found sitting in the niche, from which she descended to do her *Dance of the Five Senses*. This was the first time I had ever been able to dance in surroundings that were so deeply akin to my own motivations.

Mrs. Havens, even after the passing of her husband some years later, remained my good friend.

During the engagement in San Francisco I met Richard Walton Tully, the playwright. A more charming companion it would be difficult to imagine. He used to come three or four evenings a week and watch my performance, and he would say that my *Nautch* and my *Radha* did not tally, that the same girl did not dance them both, and as far as he was concerned the public could have the *Incense* and the *Radha* if he could keep the *Nautch*. His play, *The Bird of Paradise*, had begun its long run, which lasted intermittently for many years, and he hoped that I would assume the part of the Hawaiian girl. But it did not sufficiently interest me, and after a few conversations we stopped discussing the possibility.

We would wander night after night, when the performance was over, through the streets of Chinatown, laughing and behaving like two children. There was not a street or cobblestone that did not fascinate me, and Richard was a seasoned guide. When I returned, very late indeed, Mother would be waiting sternly on the threshold, ready to say after the door was closed, "Ruthie, you are behaving abominably. This man is not only married, but I can tell from snatches of conversation that he is not interested in the higher aspects of your work. And I think you should drop him."

Richard did his best to ingratiate her, but with no success at all. I think he was lonely and troubled at this time—his marriage was heading for divorce—and my companionship and talks of Yogis and Eastern philosophy intrigued him even if they did not sink very deeply.

In April we played in Los Angeles, and my growing interest in Japan, begun long ago in London and fostered by constant reading of Lafcadio Hearn, came to an energetic blooming. With my usual concentration I had been studying Japanese art from every angle I

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could think of. Its appeal, to be sure, was largely aesthetic, although beneath the austerity of its art forms I sensed a deep-lying spiritual motivation.

Their dancing, of course, interested me primarily. I sought out a photographer's wife in the Japanese quarter of Los Angeles, who I had been told was an ex-geisha from Tokyo and could give me lessons. As I left home I announced that in a few weeks I would have something fine to show the family.

After much questioning and delay I found a poverty-stricken house where no one spoke English. But I had come equipped with a letter from a Japanese friend which explained what I wanted. After the photographer and I had bowed to each other several times, a little Japanese woman appeared whom I afterwards described as three feet square. She wore a house kimono and had evidently come straight from her kitchen. I felt very dubious, but waited for the long conversation between her and her husband to subside. Then with many smiles she bowed me into a small living room, which was quite bare except for some mats on the floor. She changed her kitchen kimono for a dancing one with lovely long sleeves and, taking a closed golden fan in her hand, assumed the first pose. She was a changed being.

For three mortal hours I struggled with the Japanese classics in the person of this rotund geisha. She did everything that I had never done in all my dancing life. When I turned out my toes she turned hers in. When I straightened my knees she bent them. When I carried my head high, she perpetually drooped hers in that lovely line that I grew to watch forever after. With much pressing on my shoulders and much sagging of her own knees, she finally settled me in the classic mold, with knees bent, toes in, and eyes down. She was implacable. We went over and over the combination of these attitudes until every bone in my body ached. All my conceit had been drained out of me by the end of these three hours.

The back of my neck twitched so that I could hardly get through the performance that evening. Buzz stood in the wings and roared at me, because I had confided to him my conviction that there was nothing in this Japanese dancing but a change of costume and some wavings of a fan, plus the decorative sleeves.

But by the next morning all the shades of my ancestors had visited me and I could not give up. For six weeks I slowly and painfully learned how to move in my little white tabi, how to take up as little space as possible, both laterally as well as longitudinally, and above all how to approach the art of Japanese dancing with reverence. My

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airy assumption that I could "pick up enough in a few lessons" had been shattered.

Weeks and weeks later, when both my back and my spirits had been broken, I was just beginning to show signs of a little Japanese grace, and my body was coming to understand the unfamiliar attitudes of the geisha. For years I have said to all my students, "If you will master to any degree the Japanese art of dance, everything else you do will be better done." For I know nothing, not even the ballet at its strictest, which can exceed the precisions and discipline of Japanese technique.

Toward the end of these weeks I saw my first Japanese play by a second-rate company in an improvised theater somewhere off First Street. I believe that for the first time I understood the real art of acting in its highest form. The play had to do with the revenge of a Samurai mother whose son had been seduced by a girl whom she is now about to kill. I have never witnessed such a crescendo of emotional intensity. The shadows of the bare stage, the single brazier glowing red, the trembling girl kneeling alone on the stage when her mother-in-law disappears, bent on what purpose she does not know. During these few moments a silent stage bred all the horrors of the imagination. At length a terrible apparition appeared at the opening of a screen. The mother-in-law, her gray hair released and apparently standing on end; her kimono, as is the tradition in the Japanese theater in moments of great stress, slipped off the shoulders and hanging limply from the belt; her thin, drooping breasts like the dugs of some animal; her ribs showing on her lean body, and her eyes with an unholy, strange glitter. As the figure advanced the girl backed away. Then she ran a few feet in chattering terror and fell, picked herself up, ran on and fell again. This she did around the entire room, while the old woman advanced upon her with a slow, noiseless implacability. At last the girl tripped and fell before her, and the old woman, seizing her kimono, tore it away from her and, bending over the girl, appeared to bite her chest and drew something up into her mouth. Afterwards I was told this object represented the embryo of the child which this poor unfortunate creature had conceived by the woman's son.

In an unforgettable gesture of horrid satisfaction the old woman threw back her head and went into a kind of ecstasy of revenge. Then before my astonished eyes the whole scene began to move away from us on a revolving stage. I think this was the most dramatic part of the whole evening. These figures, set in their tragic plastique, were being

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slowly carried into the shadows, the light from the brazier still hovering around the hands and face of the avenger.

This was not the end of the play, but the rest did not make the same impression on me as this scene. The friends who brought us to this performance took us backstage. I was both moved and horrified by this strange form of stage art. But the climax of my surprise came when they introduced me to a Japanese boy and said, "This is the actor who played the Mother."

I have never ceased to feel the impact of that evening. Here were people, secondary actors at that, who were able to raise a fluid and intractable art to a point of culture which the Western theater has never approached.

I now became almost as engrossed in Japan as I had been in India and Egypt. Japan represented a blossoming of all my deepest aesthetic senses, and certain aspects of Japanese religion had the same beautiful quality that the Egyptian and the Hindu had. At this time I met a young man named Clarence McGhee, who shone very brightly in my life because he had lived and studied in Japan. He guided many of my first wanderings in the maze of Japanese culture, and the idea of a dance-drama began to take shape.

"The Legend of Fugen Bosatsu" which I had read in Hearn's *Stray Leaves from Strange Literature* attracted me strongly. It was the legend of a priest who desired greatly to see the Kwannon as a living presence. The scenes were in the streets and in the boudoir of O-Mika, a courtesan, who finally reveals herself to the monk as the goddess Kwannon. From this dance emerged my own *Flower Arrangement* and ultimately Ted's *Spear* dance.

In the midst of my sumptuous plans my conscience would twinge acutely when I realized that Harris was in no way recovering all the money he had spent on my last brain child, and I felt it was a point of honor to see that he recoup as much of it as possible. When I was made an offer to appear in vaudeville in New York at Hammerstein's Victoria, I felt that, in spite of my detestation of vaudeville, I must accept for Harris' sake.

We were never free from this insecurity of money. Heaven knows we were not an extravagant family. I never had any diamonds or fur coats or automobiles. We lived well on tour because we had to, but for a woman at the height of her career, earning thousands of dollars a week, I was in the paradoxical situation of being pressed by debt continually. The expense of the production was as great as that of

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any play or opera; but the performances were given only intermittently, although the overhead went on just the same.

We worked our way gradually back to New York, and in August, in the midst of the New York heat, we opened at Hammerstein's. After this engagement we kept on with vaudeville, driven ahead by this frantic determination of mine, which was not entirely shared by Buzz and Mother, to make money for Harris.

We still had the Fifty-seventh Street studio, and it was here, during this summer, that I received a note from Charles Henry Meltzer, that erudite critic of musical matters. He said that Wolf-Ferrari, whose *Jewels of the Madonna* was being sung at the Metropolitan Opera, had expressed a desire to meet me, and could they come and call? I was delighted. Meltzer, it seems, had written the scenario for an Oriental ballet, for which, if I approved and wished to dance it, he would try to persuade Ferrari to write the music.

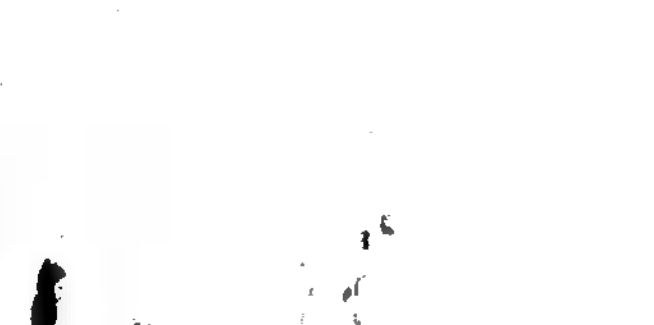
When they arrived at three o'clock Mr. Meltzer said they could stay only a few minutes, but my vanity is pleased to report that they did not leave until after six. In the interval we discussed everything from religion to politics, and ended with American composers. Ferrari enlarged at some length on his conviction that composers were missing a great opportunity if they did not turn their attention to the dance. He was a charming, volatile man and very urgently insistent that in America, at least, the dance was the coming art, to which young composers should pay serious attention instead of devoting their energies to the European operatic forms.

Unfortunately many things stood between me and their proposed ballet, but the afternoon, with its discussions of the dance as an art, made me think with great nostalgia of Germany.

Here, to Fifty-seventh Street, came also my dear John Palmer. We had first met in Dresden, at someone's party. Later, when he returned to New York and went with Steinway's, we had good times together, seeing plays and going to Italian restaurants in the days when I was allowed to eat spaghetti. It would be hard to forget his imitations of opera singers, and above all his playing of a Strauss waltz. There was nothing like it. John has remained one of my most loyal friends in season and out, all these years.

During these days an English girl named Emily Purkis came into our lives. She arrived ostensibly to help with my costumes, but our affection for her soon made her a member of the family. She was warm-hearted and keenly intelligent, deeply interested in all my doings, and the doings of the family. We gradually grew to depend on





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Emily for all the things we needed; and as the months went by, Buzz and Emily became such good friends that Mother and I would look at each other with questioning glances and wonder how this growing attachment was going to work itself out.

Many months later the working out took the shape of their marriage and the beginning of Buzz's wonderful family of two boys, George and Donald. Emily not only married my brother, but she did a thousand loving and sympathetic things for Father and Mother. She helped Buzz with great resourcefulness and love through all the periods of his unfolding business life; and she brought up two sons who are beautiful to look at and charming personalities in their own right.

After the Hammerstein engagement, we started off on more vaudeville, my period of expiation for all my grandiose dreams. The next winter was spent touring or dancing at special functions. I went far afield when I accepted the challenge of The MacDowell Club to create a Norse dance for a Saxon fete they were giving. It was all robust and vigorous movement, having a vague choreography relative to spring. I made an impressive noise in armor, with Ethel Leginska, at that time a dynamic but obscure composer, pounding up and down the keys at a furious rate. Neither of us had been able to rehearse very much, and all I can say is that we finished together.

During the winter Mrs. Philip Lydig telephoned me in great excitement and asked if I would do a little Jewish dance in a play called *Judith*, which she was putting on for some special performance in her home. Mrs. Lydig was a vivid Spanish beauty who played a colorful role in New York society. Ever since the early days of *Radha*, she had been a patroness of mine. M. de Max, a famous French actor was to play Holofernes and Mme. Yorshka, a semiprofessional, semisociety actress was to be Judith. Besides the good stipend we artists received, a delicious supper was served after the performance, to which Mrs. Lydig invited all kinds of delightful society people to meet us. The social merits of the occasion were flawless. The artistic merits were, shall I say, amusing. But Lady Lydig always did things with such an air that I for one was always enchanted to cooperate in anything she had in mind. She was becoming active at this time in the church of Dr. Percy Stickney Grant, one of the luminously charming personalities in New York religious ranks. A little later they went over the rough seas of ecclesiastical disapproval to one of the most hauntingly beautiful affairs of the heart that it is the peculiar destiny of two people to experience.



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A month after *Judith*, came the Louis Tiffany Ball. This was an especially gorgeous occasion, one of the last great private balls to be given in New York, rivaling the famous Bradley Martin Ball in magnificence. Louis Tiffany was a personality famous in both the artistic and social circles of New York. He had a magnificent studio on top of his house on Madison Avenue, and there he gave his Egyptian fete.

The room had been cleared of all furniture. A stage was erected at one end, and cushions thrown about for the guests. Everybody who might conceivably have been related to ancient Egypt was on hand, and every third one was a mummy. Luis Mora, the painter, was such a desiccated mummy that we who came near him hurriedly stepped away. Cleopatras abounded, Nubian slave girls could be bought a penny for the dozen, and resourceful costuming, that would have made the Egyptians wonder, appeared in all its glory.

Joseph Lindon Smith produced the pageant. A scene of the harbor at Alexandria showed the masts of ships and an intense blue sky. Cleopatra, in the person of the actress, Hedwig Reicher, was carried on in her palanquin to greet her lover, Mark Antony, who was concealed in the person of Pedro de Cordoba. During the festivities four huge black slaves carried on a rug which, when unfolded, disclosed Ruthie Dennis in a flesh-brown tight slip, and a short, square-cut Egyptian wig. I did my *Palace* dance with much verve and abandon; and we all had a good time.

During this winter of 1912 I was still concerned with the fact that Harris had lost more than thirty thousand dollars on me. "I am sick about it," I said. "You have been nothing but generous and kind. What shall I do?" And he replied, "I have believed in you, Ruth, from the first. Forget vaudeville. Go ahead with whatever you would really like to do. I'll still get back every cent I have spent on you."

We talked about the production of *O-Mika*, and he gave me carte blanche to go ahead. In a few days he sailed for Europe. In April he sent word that he was returning home and that we would go ahead with plans for *O-Mika*. On the fourteenth, he went down on the *Titanic*.

In these days it is hard to imagine the horror of that awful morning when the papers screamed the dreadful headlines that practically everyone had perished on that ill-fated ship. We were stunned, and for a few days my personal grief overshadowed everything. My great friend, who had expressed his continued faith and had given me such courage, was gone.

Later, when Mrs. Harris, who had been through this terrible dis-

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aster, arrived in New York and received a few of her friends she was like one distraught. She, too, had always been an appreciative admirer, and I shall never forget how in spite of her personal sorrow she wanted to concern herself with my financial plight.

But the Harris estate could do nothing for me, and we had to sink or swim on our own. I knew that whatever happened the production of *O-Mika* must go on. I had a few thousand dollars left from various vaudeville excursions, and this was sunk into the expenses of scenery and costumes. The following months were dark, and worth passing over only as hurriedly as possible. I accepted any engagements I could, in a determination to bring *O-Mika* to an audience. But *O-Mika* did not appear for eleven months after Harris' death.

When it finally opened on March 13, 1913, at the Fulton Theater it had the distinguished addition of Buzz who for the first and almost last time in his life became a classic dancer. He had always been athletically inclined, one of those valiant souls who do energetic exercises every morning. But dancing had been something of which he swore he would never be guilty.

However, when I firmly thrust two swords in his hands and told him that I wanted him to do the *Spear* dance with me he hemmed and hawed for a few minutes; but underneath all his protests I detected a wistful eagerness, and when *O-Mika* defended her honor Buzz stood up to her very stalwartly.

The Hudson Theater also housed at the regular performances that play which later became a classic, *The Yellow Jacket*. Neither of us made much money, but I hope we both made history. My good friends, the Coburns, identified themselves with it in an inimitable manner; and I shall never forget the memorable performance of Mrs. Coburn as the mother.

We presented both *O-Mika* and another Lafcadio Hearn legend, *Bakawali*, a Hindu love story, a charming tale but with no genuine importance as a dance. But from it later emerged the *Black and Gold Sari*, one of the most popular dances on my programs.

The first-night audience was both distinguished and enthusiastic, particularly over *O-Mika*. The artistic success, that ancient and honorable story, may be deduced from the press notices, and after each performance I invariably held a reception on the stage, when writers and artists and dance enthusiasts would come to pay their respects.

Shining very brightly for me at this time was Arnold Genthe, the photographer. What visions to us dancers that name conjures up; what hours of sheer delight watching his tall, distinguished figure bending

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into extraordinary postures as he sought effects for his sitters, or smiling into his twinkling blue eyes when he emerged from behind the black cloth to see that every drape was in place. By some subtle alchemy he stimulated his sitters into being their most romantic and most beautiful selves.

Arnold Genthe runs through my whole career as one of those dear beings whose enthusiasm and support I have always counted on, and he has never failed me. It was he, of course, who made photography an art, and those of us who have his prints count them the true masterpieces they are. Our long association began with the most beautiful set of photographs of *O-Mika* that it is possible for anyone to have.

It soon became evident that in spite of our artistic success it would take weeks for our audiences to increase, and meantime the Fulton Theater was expensive and we would have to make room for a more popular form of entertainment. The horrible fact emerged inexorably that in two weeks we would be out of an engagement and seven thousand dollars in debt.

During this time Braff had been wiring me from Germany to come and open a great new art theater in Cologne. It seemed to me, in my despair, that only in Europe was there the financial as well as the artistic appreciation I sought. And yet I had no money for passage and no prospect of raising it. At last I wrote him I could not come, and retired into several days of acute depression.

How I got through the last week of the performance I do not know. Buzz went around the stage with a drawn, tired face and a set jaw. Mother was visibly breaking under the strain and, growing emotionally distraught, heaped reproaches for real and fancied sins on my head. One evening, when my nerves were all on edge, and Mother was especially upset, I cut and ran. Just that. With a nickel in my pocket I ran out of the theater sobbing, and walked blindly around the streets. I did not know where I was going or what I would do. I found myself on a subway train, and then like a voice from heaven, the names of two people I had met a day or so before rose in my mind as a key to this hysterical situation. They were Mr. and Mrs. Goddard DuBois, and they lived on Riverside Drive. I had met them only briefly at someone's tea and we had talked with spontaneous enthusiasm of the Orient. They had given a collection of Egyptian jewelry to the Metropolitan Museum and they had been to India. That was my only claim upon them and I dared not stop to think what I was doing. I left the subway and

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walked straight up to 105th Street and Riverside Drive, rang the bell, and asked the butler for Mrs. DuBois.

I do not know what I said when she came toward me, her hands outstretched. She and her husband saw that I was tense and frightened, and Josephine immediately took charge of me. A little supper was set out, and later she led me to the top of the house to a guestroom which evidently the Lord had been keeping for just such people as I.

Naturally I called Buzz, but although I returned to the theater the next evening it was difficult to talk to Mother for several days. Each night I came back to this blessed haven, until I felt myself strong enough to enter the fray once more.

Finally I put my pride in my pocket and went to the office of an agent I knew and offered to do *Radha* or the Japanese in vaudeville. What would he give? Nothing seemed to be available at the time, and the interview was ended when he said, "You know we're trying to put this new Palace Theater on its feet. We need to interest society in vaudeville. If you want a week you can try it." I jumped at the idea in spite of the many disadvantages of a short engagement in which there would be no time to build up a public.

A short tour followed, which carried me to Chicago, where for the first time I danced with a symphony orchestra, at that enchanting spot called Ravinia Park. Its presiding genius was Louis Ekstein. To Chicagoans he was a familiar figure, and I can see his charming smile when we first met in his office high up somewhere in Chicago, and I can feel his enthusiasm over this center of music he was then creating with the help of Frederick Stock of the Chicago Symphony.

Right here I must express my gratitude for two conductors who at that time had the courage to support the dance side by side with symphonic music. Of Walter Damrosch's part I cannot speak personally, but he perhaps more than any other gave prestige to the dance when he encouraged and worked with Isadora Duncan. From Frederick Stock I received that same encouragement and help. There were others during the years—among them, Hans Lange and Alfred Hertz—and I shall speak of them when the time comes.

In the summer Father, Ethel Leginska, and I went off in Buzz's glorified wreck of a car to play in Maine. We got our luggage strapped to the back of this terrible contraption and my colored maid, Mary, strapped to a seat on the side of the car.

We had part of a windshield and no top. Some of the car's innards could be seen from the front; Buzz had painted the wheels red in spite of the bilious green upholstery. Poor Mary clutched to her seat as though

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her last moment had come, but Ethel loved it; and Buzz, who found her quite the lady of his heart, was in transports of delight at being able to carry her along at forty miles an hour.

Ethel was one of the most intense personalities I have ever come across. She was extremely talented, although self-willed and determined to a degree, but she had a sweetness and personal charm that was most compelling. She was one of those who heightened life for anyone who came under her spell.

Our Maine concertizing was very *al fresco*. Ethel pounded and I danced, and Buzz watered the car.

In August I was in Ravinia again, and in November I danced with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. There was much opposition from some of the more conservative patrons because, they had heard, I danced without clothes! Eventually it was straightened out when I suggested doing the *Japanese Flower Arrangement* from *O-Mika*, appearing in all my kimonos, than which there could be no more respectable covering for a dancer.

It was a curious commentary that although the audiences everywhere were huge, they were so sporadic that this winter was a continuous grapple with the wolf at the door. I was forced to accept any engagement that came along, and the horrid fact remains that the only real profit I ever made was found in the despised vaudeville.

I do not seem to have had much social life during these four years I had been back in America. Spiritually and emotionally it was a static, suppressed time. I had a number of beaux who called upon me and spent an unsatisfactory evening under the mental if not the physical eye of Mother, who subtly resented any threatened intrusions which might disrupt my life as an artist. She always managed to produce a chill in the air to which these men were, in their respective ways, sensitive. Those whose intentions were not *simon-pure* wondered how they could circumvent her; those who had hazy ideas of marriage were put off by the reflection that they would probably be marrying mother as well as daughter.

And so my own inner need for love, having little to feed on, grew on its own substance of dreams. I wanted a studio of my own, but Mother discouraged it. Perhaps, not without reason, she distrusted me. Perhaps I did not altogether trust myself. For with my tremendous vitality and capacity for living, I felt I had dwelt in my ascetic world long enough. But I never had the freedom to give way to love and I had ■ be content with casual swift attractions here and there.

Even these inconsequential affairs caused Mother much anxiety and

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many sleepless nights. In my efforts to free my emotions from their New England inhibitions I was often cruel and self-willed, and I did not in the least understand my own type or temperament. It seemed to me that all the world had its lovers and I was the only one left forlorn.

During this period, however, there was a man for whom I felt an extraordinary attraction on a very high and beautiful plane, who shall be called R for this chronicle. I had known him for some time, as, in the role of a friend, he passed in and out of my life, but his charm and poise and understanding brought about a gradual, rather dangerously subtle change in my feelings, since he was already happily married.

I see R and myself sitting across from each other in the back dining room of an old house on Eighty-ninth Street which we had taken. It is rather late. A droplight makes a circle on the table where I have spread a few sketches of a new symbolic dance I have conceived. R has come to hear about it and is now looking across the table at me with his beautiful deep-set brown eyes and is waiting for me to begin. I call it the *Veil of Maya* and, more than anything I have attempted, it is concerned with love. It was my first effort at a nonsectarian, nonracial philosophic theme.

It seemed to me that all the pain and frustration of my love life—all the desperate need and desperate fears—were thronging my heart as I looked at him sitting there with such sweet kindness in his eyes, yet with subtle desire lurking in their depths.

With him lay the old thwarting. Though he was married and reasonably happy with his wife, who was devoted and domestic, he was awakened to this new type of woman whose white fires burned from the inner carbons of the creative life. Whenever I had visited their apartment and shared their ordered family life I had wistfully watched the details of their companionship, which was based upon a deep mutual understanding. He was the tall, fine, quiet type that seemed the answer to my cry for peace. Yet this ballet that lay between us like a son waiting to be born was also a symbol of all spiritual distances that lay between my heart and his. All that was woman in me wanted to be taken in his arms and comforted and held against the world. All the long family line of my ancestors seemed to be regarding me with infinite reproach for holding up this human wave, stopping the process of creation, for some petty personal effort which would at best last but a few years and then pass with the mists of memory.

With a terrible pain I leaned back in my chair in the shadow outside the circle of the light and let my gaze rest on him. Had I indicated anything of my heart's need he would have come swiftly to my chair and

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taken me in his arms. Afterwards he would have had many hours of self-reproach and probably I should never have seen him again.

So, instead, I began to tell him of this *Veil of Maya*, and my vision of how the complete idea of man born of the Cosmic Mind first appeared as a compound Man-Woman figure.

In my ballet, high up against a vast blue sky, symbolic of limitless Mind, these sculptural figures are seen as one. Then the compound figure parts; each half turns and beholds itself as a separate entity. It descends an invisible stairway, symbolizing the descent into time, matter, and space; and when these two have arrived on earth, as mortals, the lights are darkened to a gray mist, and become the veils of Maya in which these heaven-born beings are parted and afraid.

As I explained this to R, he would come a moment and lean over my chair to see the sketches I had made, and I sometimes felt as though I could not endure another moment of his caressing voice and the touch of his hands as they hovered over mine.

My second scene showed my two parted lovers groping in the mists of their own delusions, until in one terrible moment of degradation the eternal man is about to slay the eternal woman. The woman, in her efforts to free herself from the mesmerism of his embrace, throws back her head and for the first time beholds the star which has been shining on them through the mists.

It may be that R realized in some measure that in this ballet I was telling the story of my own longing. He grew very quiet as I went on, calling, I believe, upon all his own spiritual resources to help us through these tense and beautiful hours.

Before the third and last scene of my ballet began I broke the spell to go into the kitchen and get some coffee, my favorite refuge when ideas ran high. What his wife was thinking by now I did not know, and I am afraid that I did not care; for I had a feeling that somehow these precious hours would be the last, and so it proved.

When we had refreshed ourselves with sandwiches and fruit and ubiquitous coffee, we returned to the table where lay the disordered evidences of our spiritual feast. Once more we sat and felt that each was very near—very near in all things that were of the beauty of desire, but very far from all things that might have happened on this earthly plane.

We had left my two suffering, bewildered humans gazing up at a softly shining star. The woman ceases her futile weeping and a strange new realization of being comes to her.

A faint recognition of their eternal oneness returns to them, and they start the upward ascent on the stairways of their own being, until they

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arrive at the summit of their completed realization. They were no longer, so ran my philosophic mind, the ignorant, unwise creatures who did not know the Law, but they were as gods, knowing the Perfect Whole, beautiful in their strength.

As I finished the last words of this faint outline of my image of perfected love, a great weariness came over me. I pushed back the pages of my writing and rose to say good night. No one knew in that moment clearer than I that it is simpler to understand the elements of the Cosmic Law than to find the answer to one simple human problem.

In a moment he would be gone, and now he stood looking at me with thoughtful eyes and said, "Ruth, this is wonderful. It will heal many wounded hearts." I nodded. Standing there at the top of the dark stairway, I smiled him a good night but could not speak. With terrible loneliness I heard the closing of the outside door. I turned and entered the darkened studio, which received me with a kind of desolate peace.

I sat on a bench by a window; a faint half light from the street revealed the large mirror and the blurred images of paintings on the wall. Would life go on and on in this desert of the heart?

I had paid my most constant service to the other gods of my idolatry. I had brought my adorations to the feet of Beauty and Wisdom, but now my god of love, so long neglected, was commanding my presence in his sanctuary on pain of death of all progress and all joy. For does not Wisdom spring from Love, and is not Beauty the very form of Desire?

Fragments of the old assurances came to my mind as I sat there. "Before thou speakest, I will answer." . . .

Within ten days Ted Shawn stood in this same room.





**CHAPTER IX: Ted Shawn:** How is it going to be possible for me to tell the spirit of this strange marriage so that it will not betray the depths and problems of Ted's life—which I am neither competent nor willing to attempt, this being my story and not his—nor unveil my perplexities and sins at the expense of his? At the same time I must give that which is a profound truth regarding this as yet unfinished tale of two beings who loved each other—no, still love each other—with unplumbed depths and ineradicable dye. It may well be that, when the story is all told and time has softened the outlines and reinterpreted the judgments, it will emerge as one of the really great love stories.

There was an eminent truth between Ted and me. I think it is better said in one of his letters written in our early days together: "I love you, but more, I journey with you, darling, always into the Infinite."

Later, when we both went deeply into Hindu thinking, we came upon a lovely Indian painting done in the semimodern manner of present Indian art. It showed two figures side by side going through the air. They were unmistakably Indian, his blue-black hair falling back from a fine, high forehead, and her lovely dark eyes looking straight ahead at some unknown distances, yet they were types and symbols of all humanity. The winds of heaven blew their garments away from their beautiful bodies; they were proud and free, having shaken off the shackles of human fears, and were going toward some unknown but sure and desirable goal. It was called *Siddhas of the Upper Air*.

Ted and I gazed at this delicately colored painting long and earnestly and then we turned to each other and said, "This is what we really are. Siddhas of the upper air. No matter what we go through together, or apart, no matter what sounds or images pull us toward the earth, this is where we are really going, this is what we really are." . . .

When I first saw Ted standing in the old drawing-room studio at Eighty-ninth Street he was young and sad and defenseless, and eager for greater life. His voice was flat and monotonous from a grief-stricken childhood. His eyes were beautiful and boyish and full of charm. I felt

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his latent strength even before he danced, and then at once I knew. He was defenseless because all the great problems and desires and perplexities of his own nature were yet to come. Yet he was at the same time proud and cocksure of a lot of things that he felt he had proven to himself. In one moment he believed himself equal to any demands made upon him. Then in the next moment he was an adolescent youth, unsure and melancholy, and sweet beyond words in his unconscious tenderness and need.

He was then, in his potentiality, the Ted Shawn that we now know. But what gave his coming at this period particular significance was that I had arrived at an irresolute condition of mind about my own career, and was plainly waiting for the next step.

I wanted, more than anything else, to do this new metaphysical ballet, *The Veils of Maya*. But my own state of extreme depression and my unsolved problem of supply cluttered up my mind with fears I could not seem to overcome. Mother, in our immemorial custom, had begun to take roomers again, and I knew that I would have to find some way out of the financial impasse we were in. My mind, in this state of deep confusion, had lost all sense of value, and I began to play with an insidious idea.

At this time the South American dances, the tango and the maxixe, were sweeping the country. I cynically said there were no waiters anymore, they had all turned into tango teachers. It is difficult to imagine the extent of the rage for these dances. Everywhere one heard the soft, persuasive strains of a maxixe and saw South American boys with brown skin, chops running down their square jaws, their deep-set eyes acquisitive, wearing studded belts and spurred boots, dancing with American society women for generous fees. Every vaudeville house, every restaurant depended for its life on a pair of tango or maxixe dancers.

A Southern tour seemed the only practical course for me. But instead of confining it to the things I really believed in, I was in such a negative, uncertain state, unsure of myself in all outward matters, although still strong in my deepest convictions, that to my eternal shame I concluded I must have a maxixe on the program. A maxixe, I thought, would draw the public better than a divine inspiration.

When I think of my days in Berlin, of my deep, abiding conviction of the power and destiny of my dancing, I can only pause and sink back for a moment into such abysmal self-condemnation that || I remained there long I would never come up—because the point of this tale is that I had no more business having maxixes on my program than I had to

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suffer a troupe of acrobats or the famous trained monkeys of my Twenty-third Street Proctor days.

I allowed myself to believe either that the message that was given to me was of little value or that the world did not wish to receive it, and so instead of loyalty to my own genius, such as it is, I accepted the suggestion that my program would be bettered by this alien rhythm.

Oh, stern and pitiless god of art! I lived through many years of expiation for this disloyalty.

I sent out a call for young men dancers, not at all sure what I was going to do with one on my program, but vaguely intending to use a modern ballroom dance in between my numbers. Those who came, however, were so superficial in their attitude and so inadequate in their dancing that I had almost given up the idea when Ted Shawn walked into the house at Eighty-ninth Street.

His introduction came through a mutual friend, Marianne Moeller. He arrived expecting to get a dancing lesson, and the joke of the family for years was that he never got it.

During that first long interview he told me a great deal about himself. When I sensed the deadly seriousness of this young man my interest was drawn to him irresistibly, and we talked from four in the afternoon until midnight.

I learned that he had been born in 1891 in Kansas City, where his family consisted of a brilliant father, who for years was on the *Kansas City Star* as a special writer, and a very intelligent and cultured mother. The family moved to Denver, where Ted took three years at the University, studying for the ministry. In his junior year he had diphtheria, and emerged from the hospital paralyzed from the hips down, and during that period he managed to think himself out of the ministry. As soon as he could be around he took up dancing as a form of exercise to rebuild his strength. He studied with a former member of the Metropolitan Opera Company, Hazel Walleck, but very soon began doing his own creative work. Of course, as with many another boy, the poverty problem went with him whenever he tried to study or develop. He had to do all kinds of odd jobs to keep himself going. Once he worked in a lumber camp above Denver, and once he held a very creditable stenographic job with the city water department in Los Angeles. He did two peoples' work and still managed to organize a small school and teach his pupils dances for production. At this time, with Norma Gould, his partner, he did one of the earliest dances for the films. It was called *The Dance of the Ages*, and he had to supply a dozen episodes ranging from the earliest savage rhythms up to the present ballroom dances. He believed stal-

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wartly in the function of men's dancing. To him the idea that dancing was not manly was unthinkable, and he substantiated his contention with the fact that in all barbaric tribes it was the men who did the dancing, the women merely accompanying with instruments or dancing minor parts.

From Los Angeles he and Norma Gould worked their way East on a concert tour, giving a Grecian suite, some character dances such as the Hungarian mazurka, an Oriental suite, and ending with the tango and the hesitation waltz. He said very frankly that it was these last numbers which drew the public. Being, apparently, a most indefatigable and earnest young student, he went up to New Canaan, Connecticut, as soon as he arrived in the East and spent a profitable period of study with Mary Perry King, that philosopher of motion, and Bliss Carmen, whose blending of poetry with Mrs. King's conception of the dance had resulted in a delightful book, sometime before, called *Earth Deities*. A little later he came down to New York and went on with his study of Russian and Italian ballet, and with all other forms then available to his time and his purse. He also began to teach at the Van Dyck studios, and one of his pupils was Marianne Moeller.

The fact that I allowed him to stay until midnight shows how attractive I found this boy to be. I saw that he was not only ambitious and artistic, but also that he had an instinctive spiritual sense. That he should have thought himself out of the ministry and into the dance did not mean for a moment, as I soon realized, that he had left his very true devotion to the religious life. But I understood how limiting to his physical life and how stultifying to his artistic sensitivities would be his life as a conventional minister of the gospel. The urgent need of his aesthetic and emotional life to find forms of expression could never flourish in an atmosphere of such circumscribed conventionality as the ordinary Christian church. His own destiny began to change him early, and that fateful performance of mine in Denver when he saw the *Incense* suddenly focused his vague feelings on the possible relation of art and religion.

When he left at midnight we had arranged that he return the next day to dance for me. I think we all waited with intense interest for this audition.

He returned and the family and I sat down to watch him do his *Dagger Dance*, one of those rather crude and simple rhythmic dances which in after years one looks back upon with a kind of loving tolerance.

When he had finished I exclaimed spontaneously, "This is the best male dancing material in America!" a statement which might have been

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extravagant had not my instinct been so insistent. I knew that if I were going to have a man dancer on my program this was the one man in America I would choose. I offered him then and there a position in my company.

Ten days later we started on our Southern tour, Ted having as his partner a charming girl named Hilda Beyer, who was blond and Swedish, with a charming little body and much natural grace. She was an ingenue foil for Ted, and did the numbers which he created for her or for them with the abandon of a child.

We talked about dance and more dance for all hours of the day and night. The old maternal instinct in me to help and release began immediately and with special force to go out to this boy who seemed so deadly serious about his work and yet so emotionally confused. He had written a long poem in imitation of Omar Khayyam which he called *Adolescent*. It was morbid and gloomy to a degree and I wept over it. He looked surprised, and yet it made a kind of bond between us. He was already exploring dark fields in himself, of which I was instinctively afraid. Of course, all that was possessive in me rose up to combat this side of his nature, which I sensed but did not understand.

That Southern tour was, in reality, the beginning of a new life for me. It was spring, all the fruit trees were coming into blossom in the South, the air was filled with romance. Ted and I were irresistibly drawing closer and closer to each other. We talked—oh, how much we talked. We talked on the trains, in the theaters, in the hotels.

In Paducah, Kentucky, our idyl began to bloom. We took long walks into the country, he an eager boy with lovely brown eyes, awakening to this first genuine adoration; I a young woman, drinking in his adoration with the deepest gratitude. Underneath the hectic business of dates and money and family matters and outer tensions of all kinds was growing a lovely, warm, unutterably dear relationship between my needy but unconvinced heart and his convinced but inexperienced emotions.

Once in Paducah we found a tugboat tied to a wharf and like two children we scrambled aboard, and going behind the tiny cabin found ourselves out of sight of landlubbers; here, away from the continual presence of a suspicious family, we allowed our happiness to wrap us around in a simple sweetness of unaffected joy.

He was, and always remained, an adorable lover. Moments of mounting desire were invariably followed by some delicious bit of fooling, and this love and humor have been the very fabric of our happiest hours together.

In Knoxville he sent me my first gladioli. In Norfolk he proposed.

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To all appearances I was a young woman in love, and so I was. My thwarted, starved desire for love reached out for this ardent, charming, idealistic boy who dreamed so many of my dreams; but deep beneath it all were many sad complexities. I still did not believe in marriage, for myself, but I did not have the courage to take my stand either to deny this love completely or, in accepting it, to refuse the equal bondage of marriage. Of course this is what a genuine love does to people, especially to egotists like me.

In addition to all this my family were terribly distressed to see this strange young man entering deeper and deeper into my life, and Buzz and Mother clearly showed their fear and distrust. This made Ted resentful, and brought the whole situation back on my shoulders. I knew only the urgency of love pulling me in one direction and the pattern of my creative and my family life pulling in the other. I could resolve nothing, and the Southern tour passed in indecision, nervous tension, and wonderful moments of sheer joy when Ted and I could escape from the unanswerable demands of the world around us. But these moments came very seldom and were usually furtive and hurried, either late at night when the rest of the family was in bed or precious intervals between rehearsals and performances.

When the Southern tour was over we went to Ravinia Park. I did the *Peacock* and a comic little number called the *Scherzo Waltz*, danced to a composition of our McNair Ilginfritz, who was one of the boarders on Eighty-ninth Street, a tall, vague, wistful boy who wandered about the house like a lost soul but who played waltzes for me like an archangel. Ted and Hilda Beyer did some interpretative and some modern dances.

My return ■ Ravinia Park this time, with Ted, was a period of enchantment instead of the dull business of earning an honest dollar, even though accompanied by a symphony orchestra.

Years afterwards, lying on the deck of a Yangtze River boat, half asleep, with China spread out in flat fields on either side of the slow-moving river, I had a curious sensation—as though I were dying; as though I were leaving this whole complicated drama of life for some new adventure beyond the dark gates of Death. I asked myself, "If this were really so, what would I want to remember in all my past life?" And I said, "I would remember only the hours of beauty, and the hours of love-beauty most of all." Then there arose in my mind a memory of pure ecstasy. I stood one night near the lake in Ravinia in the moonlight with Ted. It was one of those emotionally perfect moments that words cannot encompass. A fusion was taking place, a union of the most delicate and sensitive elements of each, and from this union a quality of

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ecstasy was being produced in the other. My being was at once thrilled and stilled. I can see Ted standing slightly above me, looking down with an infinite tenderness in his beautiful eyes, and feeling almost to the point of tears that this was an unforgettable moment which we would probably never know again.

I think this moment set the keynote of our love relation, which under the confusions of physically active lives sometimes sank beneath the weight of our days. Though never, I believe, did it really die, and perhaps it lives in the unseen regions of our being to this day.

Meantime, during all these productions and the details of keeping the family going, as well as the shows, Mother was growing tired, and a friend of ours who lived in Edgartown, one of those lovely sea villages in Massachusetts, urged us to visit her for a little rest. Mother loved the sea. It was always romantically connected in her mind with her youth. She once had a lover, long before Father, who lived by the sea, and I found after her death an exquisite little poem written to the sea gulls that had a strange poignancy that could have come from only a broken love. So wanting to make up a little for the suffering that I knew my love for Ted was causing her, I decided, when my engagement at Ravinia was over, to go with her on this little trip.

This was my first separation from Ted, and we knew all the curiously fateful terrors that lovers experience on their first separation. There is always the fear of loss. What will happen if we never see each other again? Yet nothing was actually decided about our marriage. This indecision meant a continuous inner struggle for me. The deep loyalty to my own work, which had carried me to this point, past so many obstacles and through many dark hours of poverty, was for the first time actually invaded. The orbit of Ted's whole being caused a terrific pull away from—or so it seemed—that straight path which led to the fulfillment of my own destiny. There is no question but that all my fears were engendered by the old days of Lizzie, poor Father's and Mother's dissonances, and by the whole weight and bondage of my belief that one could never make a legal contract of such a delicate and indefinable emotion as the love of a man and a woman.

We parted weeping, and I went and joined Mother to go with her to the sea.

But when I saw the dunes and smelt the sea I felt that I had not known such peace in years. My decision could be put off for a time. All my thoughts were with Ted in Ravinia, where he was still dancing with Hilda Beyer. I waited with eagerness for his letters, and spent a part of each evening writing to him.







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To him I wrote something of what I was feeling.

The night is laden with mists. The sea ■ quiet and over and beyond are the sand dunes, stretching away into nothingness. It is very still. The creaking of sailboats at their landing, the faint gongs of the bell-buoys, the calling of men on the boats, is muffled in the damp air of the night. The fresh smell of old-fashioned gardens by the sea comes strong and sweet after the rain. It is not late, and yet it seems far into the night. There is a sense of being cut off from former things. Of living in a quaint and fragrant past, of breathing in the traditions and feelings of a past generation, when plain living and high thinking was the viewpoint of life well spent. Yes, it is all simple and beautiful in its quaint and formal way, this little town. And there, over the dunes, is the everlasting sea.

Much that we have lived, friend of my soul, has been terribly unreal. I mean, what we have lived before we knew each other. Love has done this thing for me, that every hour I desire to be more true, more real. That in times when you need me I shall be there. And in hours when I need you, to be so without pride and without fear, that I can honestly stretch out my arms to you and say, "Help me—I need your truth!"

And from him came ardent, impetuous letters, more insistent, I suppose, than mine.

Frantically all day long I have tried to forget that the day is Sunday, and what the day has begun to mean to me. But all through crept the bitter-sweet thoughts—sweet when I remembered the last two Sundays, and bitter when I realized the emptiness of this one. I am realizing how much your love has meant to me, how it feeds me, lifts me, inspires me, and then, on the other hand, what life would be should I lose you—how empty and loveless and lifeless—oh, darling, tell me that you do love me and will keep me always.

My confusions soon returned under the pressure of his letters—to marry or not to marry. It was a confusion not of the emotions nor even of the mind, but of something psychic, deep, and resistant in my own nature; something that had nothing to do with Ted, but with all the deepest and strongest elements in the single purpose of my nature. Some of this I tried to make clear to him in an inverse way, speaking of that deeply spiritual quality which was so strongly a part of his own nature.

I was never so sure that we are justified in our firmest faith, in our wildest hopes, in art, in love and in life. Now that I am away from you in a certain special sense I can gather the whole of you together better. I want to impress upon you how much I admire and love the inner flame of your life. That first divine impulse to be, and to do far-reaching things. I do understand you, and somehow I feel that I want to, and can, help you to attain

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your highest. Yet as Tagore says, the first appearance of truth ■ illusion. It would appear on the surface that my greatest help would be, in the very nature of things, in the line of my work, because of my position in it, such as it is, and the influence that I would be supposed to have. But I believe it is not so. Even as my own career was evolved from the tiny center of my soul's strength, so only the spark of divine confidence in truth, that I have nourished and carried over from one experience to another, is ■ any real help to you.

And from him came the response:

If this separation be prolonged I shall die. If you won't let me come to you, when I leave here, it will mean that this separation has not been the agony to you that it has been to me. There is no point in my going to New York except to be with you. As long as I am away from you I will be in Hell! . . . I will come back to you starved and wilting from lack of your love and spiritual food. Nothing compensates for being away from you. Seven more days here, seven more cons.

How strange it all seems now. How many generations of lovers have asked themselves the eternal question, Where is now that marvel of the heart, that ineffable beauty of desire, those hours of enchanted existence? Where have they gone? Are they all now safe and held forever in some unseen, unchanging reality of life? Those hours of world-forgetting loveliness that were the echoes of the bliss of God? Are not the so-called realities and facts of our days but the prelude and the aftermath of those singing hours when we were the twin gods of creating-love?

Mother, during all this time, must have known something of my thoughts. But she who was generally so definite and outspoken in her correction of any of the details of my life, artistic or emotional, had little to say about Ted. I think for the first time in her life she felt herself defeated, and a great sorrow, rather than a resentment, filled her heart.

I knew that I must come to some decision. One day, sitting on the balcony of our house, looking over the roofs of the town, I turned ■ Muriel, who was our hostess. I had a letter of Ted's in my hands, an importuning letter, asking for a decision. Mother and I were returning to town in a day or two and I knew I could not delay any longer, but I still had no idea how to break down my resistance.

"Muriel, I adore Ted, but I'm afraid of marriage," I began, trusting to her quick, responsive sympathy. "I can't swear that I'll love anybody for the rest of my life. Why do I have to marry? Why can't I . . ." At this point Muriel picked up her morning newspaper. She said not a

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word; she merely pointed to the headlines. A famous dancer had, the night before, been taken off the stage for drunkenness. As I very well knew, her private life had also been, on several occasions, the source of headline interest. It was horrid and cheap and cast a degrading spell over all the dance. "Ruth, you can't do this," was all Muriel said.

I looked at her with a strange comprehension. I suddenly saw myself in my self-appointed role of guardian of those ten thousand youngsters who took so many of their ideas and ideals from the men and women of the stage. I knew that to them I was a woman of the theater who had had no front-page scandals attached to her name, for the simple reasons that there had been none to record. I wanted to stand for lofty and spiritual things in both my life and my art. My spiritual pride was deep and I did not wish to give up this image that had been created of me. That young public to whom my dances had meant so much led me to believe there was only one decision, and I made it at that moment.

By the time Mother and I started for New York, I was firmly resolved to marry Ted.

It took me many years to realize that what I did that day was to divert both myself and Ted from our predestined paths. If I had been quite true to my deepest convictions at that time and not to the standard of morality which I had been mesmerized into substituting for my truer instinct, I would have lived with Ted until our physical desire for each other had been spent and we had then been free to follow our individual paths, for I always had an ineradicable feeling that happiness between two people was something that could never be made into a contract. But I had been plunged into the age-old perplexities of our life of desire and creation versus our life of material substance and protection, which obviously the legality of marriage was designed to give. There was more than a tinge of the martyr in my decision. For how could I possibly explain to ten thousand youngsters that if I had taken a lover my motives would have been as high and my methods as reasonable as those of any young woman who wished to provide for herself and her possible offspring by not marrying the poetic, irresponsible boy of her heart, but the steady-going young man of whom her head approves?

Yet I knew that any and all sex relationships outside of marriage were classed without distinction or explanation as sinful and degraded, and of this I was not and could not be guilty. This would have been as false to myself and to my art as was marriage to my deep-seated feeling that the whole relationship of love should be free and beautiful and in no way bound.

I can imagine today a hundred well-bred brows being raised in a half-

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humorous, half-pitying manner which means, "But, my dear, why all this fuss over very simple emotional things? . . . No one cares what you do." But I cared and still care and there was involved in my sacrifice a deeper question regarding the whole business of morality itself than can possibly be gone into here.

Yet for the next few nights I cried myself to sleep, some deep fiber of my being protesting, never against Ted, whom I loved devotedly, but against this image of terror that marriage invoked for me.

And yet there were so many dear, unforgettable moments during that following week. I can still see Ted, standing on the dock in New York, waiting for Mother and me to arrive from Edgartown. He was looking up eagerly, not finding me at first, and I was dying of impatience to be off and in his arms once more. Mother, I needed no words to tell me, was wondering if this were the end of all her hopes for me, and resenting the intrusion of this young Lochinvar from the West with an intense, sorrowful bitterness.

Ted looked as though he had not slept well. He was paler than usual and appeared boyish and slender and tense, his great brown eyes burning. I longed to protect him from the battles that would begin, I knew, as soon as we reached the old house.

We said little about our plans. The days were full of tensions and mysterious currents of human love and destiny working their way toward the surface. At the same time we were surrounded by the problems of another tour, with programs and dates to be arranged, and new Hindus to be rehearsed. Buzz went about, not saying much, but thinking a great deal about this new chap on whom Sis seemed to have a terrible crush, and wondering where it would all lead. As usual, he was thinking less of himself and more of Mother and me. He knew this tight little corporation of three was about to be stood on its head, and its whole pattern changed.

Ted had no one to turn to. He knew how my family felt, and he suffered from the moments when I would give myself and my thoughts entirely over to him, and then without warning draw back into the embrace of family life. But having an inordinate amount of self-confidence, he went full steam ahead with plans and decisions that, again and again, were checked or thwarted by this hard wall of the family. He, as well as I, soon realized that any freedom and beauty of love we were ever to experience could not be in isolation, but in the midst of work and fear and resentment.

I knew that my own soul was the battleground for irreconcilable forces. All that Mother meant to me, my knowledge that she was grow-

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ing old, could not, it seemed, be related to this eager, beautiful desire that was changing the whole pattern of my life.

We went down alone on the thirteenth of August, 1914, to City Hall to get our marriage license. That trip was the only moment of hilarity in the whole solemn business. We stood in line behind an Irish woman who could not remember the name of the first of her three husbands, carelessly mislaid during the years, and her rich accents as she tried to explain to a bored official kept Ted and me so engrossed that we forgot to move along when she finally untangled her personal affairs. License in hand, we went uptown to a little bookshop which was kept by a Doctor Otterson, a retired minister who had been suggested to us by friends. Buzz and Emily were witnesses to the simple ceremony, and Dr. Otterson breathed such an air of kindness and faith in both of us that he turned a tense moment into an occasion of great joy.

When we came back I could not find Mother in the house and went alone to look for her. I found her sitting on the coping of the Soldiers and Sailors Monument on Riverside Drive. The defeated, hopeless gesture of her body told me more than any words that she accepted our marriage as the end of her long devotion to my career.

Probably the sole point on which we all agreed was that the marriage be kept secret. The only attention we received was from a certain furniture shop managed by the Grority Brothers, who announced in a leaflet, with great concern and tenderness for our married state, that at quick notice they could supply baby carriages!

Ted and I brought to the whole problem of marriage two fairly well-developed individuals. But in our attraction for each other, where there appeared to be two, there were in reality four beings to be adjusted and unfolded. Four distinct people were found in the circle of our marriage. The masculine in me and the feminine in Ted were as much alive and needing to be expressed as the physical man and woman which the world saw.

In those hours when our individual balances were for an instant held in equipoise and the divine elements were fused, then the creative and prophetic images rose in us to the heights of wisdom and beauty of which we were individually capable. For we both were of the pioneering and prophetic type, though we had in fair enough measure the interpretative and aesthetic elements which enabled us to produce and to perform those ideas and plans which welled up in our minds from hour to hour.

Though these "four" people were in constant relation and activity,

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which meant a deep and enduring comradeship of the spirit and a fairly good level of artistic accomplishment, yet neither of us provided that particular stimulus of emotional contrasts which produces creative beauty. Thus we were to find from time to time, even during the years of our marriage and in the midst of great confusion and suffering, release in other personalities than our own. This brings us to something that took me many heart-burning years to realize. It is through Shiva, the lord of time, the creator, the manifestor, that we function at our highest creative moments. Shiva brings together the two young people in passionate and idealistic love in order to continue the race. Shiva also, in the realms of the arts, brings together for a brief period two opposite temperaments who are at once caught in the processes of emotional creation. This phase of our creative life has seemingly nothing to do with our affections, with our moralities, or with the permanence of human institutions over which Vishnu presides. In a word, we artists of high-tensed, emotional natures are stimulated into a transcendent activity of the mind, the emotions, and the body by contact with exactly that responding personality which unconsciously obeys the creative law. Ted and I helped each other in all possible ways, but we were rarely stimulated by each other into the throes of a new creation. This psychic need, that lay in the heart of both of us and eventually demanded its answer, contained at this time the seeds of possible discord or possible separation.



## CHAPTER X: Artists Learning to Live: SARATOGA

marked the beginning of our—heaven save us!—honeymoon.

Saratoga . . . what memories that brings. My eager lover—my fellow artist—my spiritual comrade, wars and rumors of war, family unhappiness and financial difficulties, two people with almost diametrically opposite temperaments. What a partnership it must have been to have endured these tensions and come out alive and beautiful.

In my inner circle, among those who were privy to this marriage, there was much lifting of eyebrows at the difference in our ages, much discussion of the probable conflict between two such intense egotists. There were even hours when these controversies raised fears within ourselves, but there were many more happy hours of world-forgetting radiance, when the strong winds of love carried us over one-night stands, local managers, stagehands, horrid notices, and poverty.

Buzz, carrying on his accustomed stage managership, watched these newlyweds with a half-affectionate, half-questioning look, but with never very much to say. However, the inevitable began to happen. Ted, strong, positive, with definite ideas as to how to run performances, met headfirst with Buzz, who, although mild in manner, had many years' experience behind him, and probably felt he did not need a newcomer to tell him how to run lights or manage the baggage bill. They were both young and each felt a certain possessiveness toward me but little affection toward each other.

Mother, back in New York, kept on with the Eighty-ninth Street house, lonely and sad, but in my terrible egotism of happiness I did not think very much of her state of mind.

I barely remember the places we played and I have no desire to remember them. I only know that for the first time in my life I let the business of being a dancer look after itself. I was happy and I wanted to taste the full flavor of my happiness. Day after day Ted and I sat, in the early-autumn mornings, looking out of the train window at the country, a tapestry of yellows and browns, and thought how especially beautiful the whole world was. At night we would stand on the last platform ■



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the last car, listening to the crickets and to the little tree frogs with their mournful, concerted cries, which always reminded me of the farm. We would lean against the door of the car, very close together, silently letting the rails and the train beat out their rhythms, and then someone, a conductor perhaps, would rudely wrench open the door and we would, loverwise, spring apart and busily examine the countryside.

Of course, like a dark thread woven through our days was the war. But we were so absorbed in each other and so absorbed in what we were going to do with this immediate life together that we did not allow the war to intrude on us except at intervals.

It became apparent, as soon as we really settled down to the business of dancing and planning together, that the eternal challenge of two positive individuals was going to rise again and again. From the moment that we began to work together there occurred those discussions and near-quarrels over some ill-defined but dynamic qualities of our individual egos which lasted during the whole of our lives together. Each of us was definitely, stubbornly aware of his own rights, his own prestige and artistic possessiveness. Quite truly I had not made up my mind, even after seeing him dance, in what capacity I wanted Ted to appear with me. He says, and I do not doubt his word for a moment, that I gave the impression and doubtless used the word "dancing partner" very early in our relationship, but apparently his understanding of the title involved equal prestige from the very start and this, of course, the family, as well as I, resented. On the other hand, my desire for the support and help of another young artist, while at the same time retaining my full solo position, gave rise to the following discussions.

"Didn't you engage me to be your dancing partner, and if so, why don't you say so?"

"But, Teddy," would come my answer, "you can hardly expect to assume something at your age and experience which should, in the natural course of things, come later on."

"Well, can you get anyone better? You said you needed a man dancer and here I am. The trouble with you is that you want all the support and work and creativeness and help of a partner without giving credit. You want it, and you don't want it. You're not being honest."

That was preposterous! Of course I was honest. . . . Well, was I? I was flicked on the raw, and wept, and Ted tried to comfort me, without in the least taking back the truth of what he had said.

Yes, I suppose that is just what I did want—a partner, without saying so. Ted, in turn, was constantly assuming a development which came

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in great fullness years afterwards and of which, within his own mind, he was firmly convinced, but which the world could not see with the naked eye. Not that what he did was inadequate. On the contrary, his ideas and his technique and performances were, in those days, very good, often thrilling, and never failing to give promise of something finer as he grew. But he was putting his immature work up against an older and more finished artist, one who had the discipline of a much longer career. The result was a constant depression and resentment on his part and a sick feeling in my woman's heart of the effect those endless discussions would have on the delicate fibers of our love.

That specter—Billing—which haunts everyone in the theater, visited us very soon. It is an inevitable, terrifying symbol, the fetish of the ascending artist and the avenging god of the descending artist. It is hard to overestimate the paralyzing fear that hovers over this simple business of a spot on the program, the size of the type on the *affiche*, and the allotment of publicity. On the surface it all seems a matter of rank, egotistic pride, but it is much more than that. It is the outer gage of the rise and fall of the artist's value in the markets of the world. The outward manifestation of this symbolism in our careers was shown on the programs of our performances, where one saw the gradual and inevitable rise of Ted's name. One can easily realize how necessary and at the same time how impossible it is for two people to impersonalize their attitudes toward this symbol of success.

It was amazing that our inner life stood up under the onslaughts of these two intense egos. Many another has gone down before ours. Sometimes, much later, in our worst moments of this kind, we would stop and say, "Oh, darling, can't we somehow manage to keep out of Reno? Couldn't we be the exception and really be what the world thinks we are—two wedded lovers who also work together?" For we both wanted desperately to be that ideal of unity we carried in our minds.

But during the increasing perplexities of our work together and in the midst of our greatly enduring happiness, I came gradually to realize that I was going against everything that I regarded as intuitively right and going with everything that seemed traditionally necessary. Questions continually arose in the depths of my own spirit. What had happened to that inspirational creativeness that marked the high point of my career?

We had managed to keep our marriage a secret for several months, but in Kansas City I made myself the victim of a joke which hung over

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my head for years afterwards. A charming girl reporter came to interview me about matters connected with the performance. After answering her various questions, some imp of satan put into my brain the idea of confiding to her, of course not for publication, that Mr. Shawn and I were married! Swearing strictest secrecy, she dashed off to the nearest telephone and the next morning I woke up to find myself, in the headlines of every paper in the country, married to "the most beautiful man in the world," Ted Shawn's and Paul Swan's names having been confused. Hilarious laughter on Buzz's part, wrath and consternation on Ted's and hysterical apologies on mine.

We had toured now all through the summer and were coming into the autumn. After a while we felt as though we were stationary, and the various towns would flash into our consciousness for a few brief hours and then rush on again. But during these long Pullman rides that parentage which it was our destiny to achieve began to gestate. "The School" invaded most of our underlying thoughts.

Just how it first arose in our minds I cannot say. Ted, of course, had had his school in California, but while I had done a little brief teaching to some society women I had never taken the idea seriously. But with Ted it very soon became a driving force, and I found myself, in the main, delightedly swept along on his enthusiasm.

Ted's conceptive mind in relation to the school was infinitely clearer and stronger than mine. His whole being leaped to an organization which would take care, in its housing and schedules, of those elements of art, those techniques and that culture which we were bursting to give. My part, obviously, would be to supply the atmosphere. My Oriental career and his own former teaching and performing experience were the substance upon which he was to make his design. From first to last the outline and organization of the Denishawn School was Ted's. My part was to supply, in the unfolding years, the color of the Orient, certain concepts of musical visualization inspired and derived from Isadora's attitudes toward music and the dance, and such spiritual inspiration and teaching as could be given within the close and hurried activities of a school of the dance.

Of course the school must be in California. And it must be out of doors. It was inconceivable that the natural, free expression of the body should be confined within four walls. The marvel was that there had not been an outside school or theater of the dance long before, but as far as we knew we were the first to achieve it.

Many people have wondered how we came to call our school Denishawn, and this is how it came to be. In Portland, Oregon, which

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we reached late in the fall, the manager of the theater where we played offered a prize to the person who suggested the best name for an untitled duet of ours. The prize was given to a Miss Margaret Ayer for her suggestion, *The Denishawn Rose Mazurka*, the rose being in honor of Portland, "the rose city," and thus was born this now-famous name.

By now we had mentally deposited ourselves in Los Angeles, and were straining to be there in fact, but in the interval a very good engagement was offered us in San Francisco and there for the last time the whole family came together.

Mother and Father joined us in order to see the Fair, Mother having given up the old house in Eighty-ninth Street and pulled up their roots. To Father California was the end of a long dream. In the days of the farm he used to plan how we could take the family West in a freight car, and whenever there was an especially gorgeous sunset he would lean over the railing of the old veranda, and, looking toward the west, say, "There lies California. Someday I'm going to get there."

We all saw the Fair together in that enchanted city by the sea, and then Ted and I produced our first joint ballet, *The Garden of Kama*. The scenario was provided by the various poems of Laurence Hope, whose fame at that time rested on her *India's Love Lyrics*.

At this time Ted brought home to our affections that adorable individual Albert Bender, who runs through the whole fabric of San Francisco's artistic and social life. Albert spoils his talented stars of the stage, his writers, known and unknown, and his affectionate friends with his generosity and charm. The gifts of St. Albert, as I call him, are known to all of us who have the privilege of his friendship.

We reached Los Angeles in the late spring. I settled Mother in a little apartment and Father soon went out to his beloved Sawtelle, that haven of the old soldiers from the Civil War which had loomed up in his mind, lo, these many years, as the place where he wished to end his days. He visited me often at the school and came to see Mother frequently over the years. In California he found some measure of that happiness of which he had so long dreamed.

And now began the immemorial hunt for the place to live and work. In our enthusiasm it was great fun. Each new house loomed up in our minds' eyes as the house we were looking for. But always when we got there the room was not big enough, the rent was too high, or there was not space to build our outdoor studio. This went on for weary days.

However, we did find a delightful old house on a rise of ground. The indoor room was big enough to hold small classes in. Outside

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were a swimming pool and tennis court, surrounded by tall eucalyptus trees, through which, at night, we caught glimpses of the city and its twinkling lights. It was what we wanted, and we began to put our plans into action. Over the tennis court we proceeded to build a dancing platform, and arrange for canopies when the weather was bad. A practice bar was the railing of the court, and mirrors were set up. In an arbor a place was prepared for the musicians. Ted, as usual, bore the full brunt of organizing and putting into form and order the ideas that we both had. We used to call ourselves, "Spirit and Form." You can easily guess which was which.

In reply to our first little catalogues pupils came to us from all the near-by states, and a good many of Ted's old pupils from his former Los Angeles school joined us. Those first pupils deserve a mention, as they were the foundation stones of a system that was to spread over the country. Margaret Loomis, who grew into one of the dearest of my spiritual comrades; Addie Munn, daughter of Ted's beloved Mother Munn, who played such a happy part in his early days; Helen Eisner, daughter of our adored Auntie Dot; Florine Goodman; and Aileen Flaven, now Mrs. Gardner. In a little while it expanded to take in Florence Andrews, who for several years danced with great success under the name Florence O'Denishawn; Sadie Vanderhoff, a society girl of San Francisco, who starred in vaudeville as Vanda Hof and later married Paul Whiteman; Carol Dempster, who was one of D. W. Griffith's stars; Ada Forman, who for many years was a featured dancer with the Greenwich Village Follies; Claire Niles, who became one of my leading concert dancers; Chula Monzon; and Yvonne Sinnard.

Sometime during this first year a long-legged youngster was brought by her mother; this little girl, I saw at once, had an almost mature sensitivity to certain values of the dance, though she was still on the edge of childhood. She was Margaret Severn. One day I asked her if she would like to do the *Yogi* as a solo, and she thrilled to the idea. So I gave her a little extra time in explaining the motivations of the *Yogi*. Then I forgot about her for several days.

One afternoon her mother said that Margaret would like to show me how she had worked at the *Yogi*. In a yellow turban and a *dhoti* she looked like a slender Hindu boy. Putting on the record, she went through the whole *Yogi* plastique with such seriousness and charm that, for no reason I can explain, the tears came to my eyes. She seemed the embodiment of qualities which I yearned to communicate to the youngsters in my class; this child reflected back to me the loveliness

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of that Oriental sense of stillness and beauty. Her future career attested that rare temperament and beauty that was in her.

Little Marjorie Peterson came about the same time, too—a joy to look at, and a joy to teach.

The teaching system was largely evolved by Ted. Our attitude from the beginning was, as Ted so aptly put it, that "the dance is too big to be encompassed by any one system." With us the development of the individual was foremost. When possible we gave a "diagnosis" lesson to the incoming student in order to learn the technical and temperamental direction that the student should follow.

There were basic techniques which we felt were absolutely necessary; but, resting upon these techniques, the pupil was encouraged to experiment with the entire gamut of lessons and dance culture which the school provided. The whole articulation of the school—Ted's and my talents and experiences, the technical classes, the library, and the lectures—was intended as food either for the student who merely wanted a deepening and releasing experience of life or for the definitely avowed dancer with a career before her.

Ted's work was far more technical than mine. My teaching was confined, in the beginning, to the Oriental work. But lectures were given by visitors, in the main house, music was taught, and Ted began instructions in the art of dyeing and the treatment of fabrics. The history of costume was included and wide perspective was opened on all the related arts. An exhaustive search through the advertising of dance schools before 1915 did not show any other school that included all the arts as an essential part of the dancer's training.

Later on, as the school developed, we invited teachers of other systems, or certain individuals with special gifts, to join our staff in order to enrich the whole learning of the school. During the fifteen years of the school these teachers ran the whole gamut from one of the first Dalcroze teachers in America to Margareta Wallmann, a Mary Wigman disciple. We had Kulamanu to teach the real Hawaiian hula, and Ted discovered a Japanese sword dancer in Los Angeles who showed some of the basic elements, while later on, as a friend, Misha Ito explained some of the finer points of these famous Japanese dances.

That this system, or as Ted has said, lack of system—since it embraced so many techniques and cultures—proved harmonious to the American spirit and youth was witnessed in the following years when one considers the number of creative dancers who emerged from the walls of Denishawn.

But during this first summer on St. Paul Street we had not attained

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all these far-flung activities. Both the life and the organization were simple in the extreme. The bookkeeping and financial system was natural as the wind. An old friend of Ted's, Mary Jane Sizemore, went around with a cigar box and each pupil put a dollar in it for the lesson. This dollar included lunch, which was brought out to the rose arbor where we had built some plain wooden benches and tables.

Sometimes when I look at a particularly lovely old Chinese painting showing a picnic in full swing out under a wide-spreading tree, a lovely brook meandering by, the ever-blue receding mountains in the distance, and an air of enchantment as of a perpetual autumn afternoon over it all, I am reminded of those first early days of the school.

For, of course, it was much more than a school—it was the way we all wanted to live.

Our day would begin something like this. We bounce out of bed—at least I bounced but, as a matter of fact, Ted always rose sluggishly to the surface and until the rite of coffee was over he did not come alive. I launch out on some exalted theme of attack, such as the evils of the moving pictures as a corruptor of the young. Fortunately for Ted, in the middle of this a head appears in the doorway, announcing firmly that the first class of the day is about to begin. I scramble into my practice dress, Ted into his bathing suit, and rush down to the studio.

Sunshine everywhere—long, sharp morning shadows on the tennis court, cast by the eucalyptus trees which stand between us and the city below. Here the class is assembling, the girls looking very eager and bright in the morning air. The sky is cloudless, and a kind of magic for all of us hangs over the trees and the pool near by and over the arbor, under which we shall presently lunch together. I think I can speak for most of our youthful household when I say that when compared with the so-called normal living in home, or office, or school, this assembling of ourselves together out of doors for purposes of beauty, for the rhythmic control of our bodies, for the happy relationship with one another in this adventure of the mind as well as of the body, was an experience that none will forget.

Faint murmurs arose from the distant activities of the city, yet when Ted would call the class to the bar for the first morning work, or I would sit with them at the sunset hour in Yogi meditation, there was an intense world-forgetting concentration, fused with an awareness of a new order of life. Neither our petty egotisms, gossipy minds, family irritations, nor our business difficulties existed. We were having our being in nature, in rhythm, in beauty, and in a new realization of life. We were happy and busy and filled with a desire to create a new

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heaven and a new earth, and we very nearly did. Students in after years came to us on tour and their tears mingled with ours, remembering the delights of those lovely and exciting days where the eucalyptus trees shaded our classrooms and the stars lighted our quiet hours when in groups we talked on the garden benches.

The school and this new life appeared at a certain time and in a certain place, and in years to come will be found to have provided a certain thread running through the art life and possibly some of the spiritual life of America. Even as our country is young, so the school was a product of youth. At the same time, it was then absolutely necessary that we draw our sustenance from the ancient wisdoms.

The Greek, the Oriental, and the Hebraic constituted the underlying spiritual guides of Denishawn. Ted represented the Greek philosophy to some extent, and has gone on in that line of thought and feeling increasingly down to the present day. I was deeply sympathetic to the old Eastern modes of thinking and artistic expression. And, in our hours of mutual need, and of greatest exaltation, we turned instinctively to our common Christian heritage of Hebraic thought.

These levels of expressive consciousness lay near the surface with both of us. We were eager to reveal and to see manifested those elements of the ancient wisdoms restated and relived by our school in an atmosphere of simplicity and beauty, and above all in an atmosphere as near nature as was possible. For years it was our dream to have a real country center, which was to bear the amusing slogan "from agriculture to art." We both felt so strongly that the whole student body should be released into the three planes of activity: spiritual, emotional, and physical. These often spoiled, bewildered, egocentric young creatures should not only be exposed to a deep simplicity, as against the terrible and stultifying conditions of the average young artist in the cities, but be gently though firmly made to face the fact that rent must be paid and food and clothing earned before they were free to give expression to their artistic release. We felt strongly that in an ideal school of this kind a trade should be learned by every student, a learning which would run parallel to his artistic progress. This learning of a practicable, wage-earning, technical trade, capable of sustaining him in self-respect, and in a reasonable comfort, would be a requisite. We felt we should have the country for creating, and the city for marketing. This theme ran through the woof and web of our institutional life from the beginning, but obviously we were able to make only ineffectual and sporadic attempts to put this phase into practice.

For real success, teachers, not only in the arts but in these trades,



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would be necessary. The trades would encompass the technical sides of electricity, photography, gardening, house crafts, and hand crafts; and many other practical applications of living. The student, over a sufficiently long period, was to learn these trades so thoroughly that if some unaccountable obstacle were to prevent him or her from becoming self-supporting in an art life he would then have the means of sustenance in his trade.

Later we came to the inescapable conclusion that if we were ever to reach the goal toward which we turned all our hopes we would have to have a full academic course. We wanted to attract those younger children whose parents quite rightly did not want them to develop artistically at the expense of their normal academic education. Over and over again we had come up against the problem of the talented child whose father wanted her to go to high school and possibly college and whose mother was sympathetic to her unfolding talent and realized her lack of interest in dry, factual education. What were they going to do? We longed to solve this problem. During the life of Denishawn it was always in the forefront of our minds. Could we have had an endowment we would have added these two requisites which we felt were so sadly lacking in our training of young artists: the industrial and the academic curricula needed to round out the complete education of the dancer.

I had already seen so much of what I used to call "studio living" for young artists, and all the self-centered, petty, limited activity of those unmoral and poverty-stricken lives, that I desperately longed to release them into a new kind of existence while unfolding the highest that was in their dreams of art. The mother in me wanted to gather all the talented, bewildered children into a safe harbor of clean beds and good food and home. The artist in me wanted to create an environment of nature, and then perform in the stimulus of the cities. And the philosopher wanted to teach the oncoming generation some few letters of that profound word which holds the residue and essence of all our human knowledge and experience, the ancient word of Wisdom.

In a word, we dreamed about a school of life.

All these hopes and ideals came to us in their embryos during these early days. Now, for the time, all we could do was to release the bodies of our pupils into a freer expression. Most of them came from stuffy, conventional homes, and they had never known a life quite like this before. They swam in the pool, ate in the rose arbor, worked under the trees. We put bathing suits on them for working clothes, and turned them out into the sun. The release they felt from the circumscription

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of their ordinary lives filled the days with an artless charm and freedom.

We had birds and dogs, and cats as well. One day, soon after we were settled, Ted came home triumphantly bearing a present for me. It was a peacock, wrapped, if you please, in a Sunday newspaper, his proud head sticking out of the front, and his lovely long tail streaming away from the newspaper in the rear. The whole school instantly assembled and stood around with "oh's" and "ah's" of admiration.

We named him Piadhi Morh and gave him a home of chicken wire at the end of the garden, where his gold and purple majesty was surrounded by eucalyptus trees. He was put in his cage and water and food laid inside, and we all reluctantly went about our business. During the afternoon, having temporarily forgotten him, we began a class; but with the first notes of the music, Piadhi Morh rose up and out of his cage, across the top of the trees, and set out for the open country and parts unknown.

Ted gave a yell, "The peacock's gone!" and dressed as we were, in bathing suits and practice costumes, we streamed into the road that led to the street. Astonished pedestrians stood still in their tracks, gazing open-mouthed at this troupe of half-clad youngsters and a shouting man in a bathing suit chasing something they could not see.

After half an hour, running up alleys, dashing into people's back yards, inquiring breathlessly of gentlemen peaceably watering their lawns if they had seen our runaway peacock, we finally treed him on the ridgepole of a little bungalow, where he made taunting remarks to the world below. He certainly had outdistanced us, and there seemed no way of getting at him before he decided to move somewhere else.

Finally, to our joy, a skinny little lad of about ten, who had been delightedly watching the circus, offered to go up in some incredible manner and rescue the peacock. Standing on Ted's shoulders, he began a perilous climb to the peak, where, by inching quietly along while Piadhi Morh haughtily surveyed the world, he was able to grab his tail. So it was all over but the shouting. Ted found a ladder and brought them both to earth, and Piadhi Morh was borne ignominiously home.

I suppose we were queer fish to most of the city which noticed us at all, but gradually the intelligentsia and artists began to sense that something was happening behind the eucalyptus trees on the hill, and many interesting people climbed up the little road to see us.

One of our first callers was Mrs. Richard Hovey, whom Ted bore triumphantly home. She was a remarkable woman of seventy-five, who had studied with François Delsarte and was his only living American

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disciple—a wonderful witness to his system of teaching—the other two, Steele MacKaye and Genevieve Stebbens, having passed on. She was still slender and upright, with an eaglelike head and a thick mass of gray hair that was worn anyway it suited her. She had an incomparably dry wit, and when she first laid her bag down on the tea table under the eucalyptus trees she looked at Ted and then at me and said, "Well, which one of you is wearing the pants?" As it was to take Ted and me at least twenty years to find out, we could only roar with laughter. We arranged for her to come to give a series of lectures on Delsarte, from which, I think, we profited as much as the students.

William Dallam Armes came up the hill to the school. He was one of the most delightful men I ever knew. Professor at the University of California, he had been a great fan of ours and from the moment we met him he began to talk of a large performance in the Greek Theater at Berkeley if and when he could break down the resistance of the authorities. He was one of the few men in the West who was thoroughly cultured and cosmopolitan. Whenever we were with him the sheer force of his personality transported us into another world of artistic values, of painting, sculpture, music, literature.

The motion pictures were beginning to invade California, and some of the early stars found their way to Denishawn. The Gish sisters took lessons from Ted and me, Dorothy with a crisp charm of her own, and Lillian with her fragile, wraithlike beauty. About the same time the incorrigible and invigorated Rosizcka Dolly appeared. She and Lillian were to do a film, *The Lily and the Rose*, and Ted and I were delegated to teach them the dance to be used. On our first wedding anniversary in August Rosie sent us a huge basket of flowers, on the handle of which was fastened two stuffed doves!

Ted's and my lovely Margaret drew us into the hospitable home life of the Loomis family, Mother Loomis of the delicious table, Father Loomis managing his very smart hotel, and Margaret in the first flush of her dance enthusiasm. Later she had a brief career in the movies, but her heart still clung, I know, to the old Denishawn ideals.

We were a very close collective group that summer. We were all exposed to the same stimuli; our responses went out from the same base, but with individual forms of expression. That whole first summer was spent finding our way to a different form of life, putting the pieces of our individual patterns into new and fascinating designs. There was an inexpressible joyousness about it, of life released and finding an unexpected level. We danced under our trees, we danced in other people's gardens, we danced on the beach; the wind and the sunlight

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were our partners. To the beauty of this expanded life we brought all our resources and enthusiasm.

In those days there was nothing too great for us to dream of. There is something in California, as everyone knows, which releases fantastic ideas, which seem totally impracticable anywhere else, and utopian longings of the human heart. In this state, with its westernized culture looking toward the Orient, with the sea and the mountains in such thrilling juxtaposition, there is always the possibility of what our theosophical friends call the beginnings of a "sixth-root race." In plain language, the possibility of living a new order of existence. And this hope colored our dreams by day and by night.

As the summer went on, however, Ted and I became keenly aware that, no matter how fascinating the school activities were, our major work was performing. And we began, partly consciously, partly unconsciously, to look at our pupils with a new eye and move toward the formation of a group which would eventually be known as the Denishawn Dancers, and which was to provide the nucleus of an American ballet. We began to talk of a tour in the fall and "programs" interspersed our classes.

My artistic relation to this coming organization had completely branched off at right angles from my former single-minded solo conception of my own temple dances. I was obliged to consider myself a part of an organization of independent entities, not a soloist with a group of dancers to support me. I had quite definitely parted from my path, which led through the ritualistic dance. During the years of Denishawn I did occasionally bring into the programs some elements of spiritual beauty in a brief solo here and there, but in the main we were forced to interweave the three elements that confronted us—Ted's career, my career, and a whole batch of youngsters with ideas and personalities of their own; and because of our lack of financial backing these programs must be made popular enough to meet the demands of the public. Pulled this way and that by bills which must be paid, salaries which must be met, standards of living to be maintained, and programs to be arranged, there was not that degree of artistic unity and technical perfection that my soul desired. But these were, after all, the first green shoots of a tree that season by season would put forth branches until it assumed the proportions of our performance at Carnegie Hall in 1927.

From the first, Ted's and my ideal regarding the company was that it should be composed of American substance as fast as possible. Ted was more deeply concerned than I with the infinite possibilities of

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thematic material of American sources, with new techniques growing out of this ballet, as well as with the nature of the personnel. My psychological attitude regarding this new development rested on two points. The first, that the Orient was my personal art which audiences would expect me to give for some years to come. The second, that the still beauty of the East should be infiltrated into both the school and the company as compensation for the space-covering athleticism of our American life. For after all, what do we mean by America, and what do we mean by an American ballet? Isn't it bound to be made up of elements that are poured into our national consciousness year by year?

My sense of my own artistic destiny never left me, but at this time I was engrossed in my new motherhood, watching over the developments not only of Ted but of those students and those joint activities which were occupying our immediate and enthusiastic attention.

But there were hours, which Ted sensed in me, when I drew away. Then the stern and rarefied regions of my consciousness which had burned with such a light in the early years would again catch me for an hour or a day with their visions of that life which was, when all was said and done, my real offering to the world of the dance. At those times I was desperately unhappy. I had a feeling of a spiritual and artistic sin. This mode of company life and program making was alien to the highest elements of my own destiny. The only escape I had was in writing down some of the ideas belonging to that other realm. Since I could do nothing about them within the confines of this school life I began putting these metaphysical ballets on paper, and not for many years did they assume another shape.

When the autumn came we decided to close the school for the winter and devote ourselves entirely to performances and moneymaking. We had selected eight of our best girls, and Buzz was again the manager. Sometime during the tour Louis Horst joined our forces. This was really an event of far-reaching significance for the dance in America. From the first, Louis slipped into the sympathetic supporting attitude toward the dance which enabled us to release many of our ideas more quickly and more beautifully than we could have done without him. His delightful personality, both easygoing and sensitive to all qualities of beauty, human and artistic, made him one of the pillars of the church of Denishawn. His wife, Betty Horst, was a member of the ensemble until she branched off and established her own successful school in San Francisco.

The tour carried us by December 27 to the old Hudson Theater of blessed memory in New York. We were in the throes, this first season,

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of amalgamating the different elements of our personal careers and the immature output of the school, and at the same time trying to feel around and entice to our use those scattered instruments which this new venture of concert dancing was bringing to the surface. One of our difficulties was brought out in a review of our long and heterogeneous program which included everything from *Radha*, the *Spirit of the Sea*, and *Nature Rhythms* to an *Aloha Waltz*, a *Dog* dance, a *Canton Canter*, a *Baseball* dance, and a *Valse Directoire*. The critic concluded with:

Surely the elaborate entertainment offered yesterday would have gained greatly in effectiveness if it had been associated with music more appropriate, more refined, more suggestive, more interesting, than the absurd mishmash of clashing styles by a small orchestra.

What he said was perfectly true, and we were as aware of it as he, and it was just these faults that we sought to remedy as the seasons went by. The whole question of music for the dancer has always bristled with difficulties. The ideal thing is to have music written for each and every ballet. But this involves time and expense and the right composer. Ted did achieve this ideal to some degree a few years later in his all-American program, in which original compositions supported original choreography. At that time Charles Wakefield Cadman and Homer Grunn were commissioned to do two stunning pieces which were the delight of the seasons in which they were performed, but we must remember that serious musicians had not yet begun to turn their attention to the dance. The successful ones, capable of writing excellent music, could obviously not afford to compose for an impecunious ballet. Although our New York critic's point was well within the bounds of truth, he did not stop to consider that we of the dance in America had to beat out every foot of our progress with practically no artistic assistance from anyone. Public response, yes, was assisting us to some financial degree, but only if we maintained our programs on the level of entertainment, as well as of art.

This season saw us following the usual pattern. We started out bravely and a bit snootily with our concert company. We received the full attention of the critics and the charming enthusiasm of cultured audiences. We felt our oats! Then we began to realize, about the middle of the winter, that the baggage-haul bill was mounting up, the scenery had not yet been paid for, the school had its mouth open. We lent a kindly ear to our vaudeville agent and, before we knew it, here we were, the program cut down and some things left out, doing

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two-a-day but with a peaceful feeling of sending home a thousand dollars to pay off those bills. But what about the days of unadulterated art?

In the turn from concertizing to vaudeville Ted and Buzz reached a climax. Buzz began to see quite obviously that I must go with Ted and the school, that I would become increasingly a part of this great partnership which was an entirely different life from the old days of *Radha*. Meantime he had been getting some ideas for vaudeville, and with the necessity to make more money for himself than we could afford to pay him he came to a final decision. We were to continue on, and he to produce a vaudeville act of his own to be called *The Dancing Girl of Delhi*, with one of our most charming dancers, Sadie Vanderhoff, now become Vanda Hof. Buzz tried two or three seasons to continue in vaudeville, but I think psychologically it held no vital interest for him, so he eventually left the stage entirely and with Em's valiant help began to prepare himself to enter the oil business in Wyoming.

Our vaudeville season began at the Palace in New York with great éclat. We had put together a popular program without in the least changing the individual numbers. We had speed and variety, and that it went well with the general public, composed of tired businessmen, leisurely-ladies-in-between-bridge-games, out-of-town visitors, and the ubiquitous gallery gods who came to all vaudeville openings is evidenced by the fact that more than five thousand people were turned away during the two weeks' engagement.

I had the great joy, at this time, of being painted by Robert Henri in my *Peacock* dance. What an unforgettable person he was! I shall always remember my hours of posing in his studio down in Gramercy Park. For once in my life I found someone who knew more and could talk faster than I. I actually listened hour after hour. One of his mornings was devoted to the regeneration of mankind, all encompassed by one suggestion: In the public squares of every city in America, men and women at some time during their lives, presumably in their maturity, should be made to stand on a pedestal in a public square, quite nude. This was to prove that clothes could no longer conceal our deficiencies and would be a spur to the child of five, who, knowing that sometime during its oncoming life it would have to go through this grueling experience, would not only watch the calories but would get busy with its posture, with its walk, color of its skin and hair, and above all with the personal dignity which Henri so clearly saw must be developed in us.

The next months, until the spring, were spent in our vaudeville

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haunts. We grew to know all the virtues and vices of concert versus vaudeville. Our life for many years from this period consisted of a kind of triangle, with the school at its apex, creative productions given in theaters and concert halls in the one corner, and the inevitable and necessary vaudeville in the other. As I see it now, we were a kind of peripatetic institution, containing all the elements which a real school or temple of the dance should contain: teaching, production, and repetition. The first is the preparation of all the material, human and inanimate; the second is the creative use of these materials; the third is the marketing. All American dance companies and schools have unconsciously acted upon this design, and our lofty and contemptuous attitudes toward vaudeville merely betray our shortsightedness.

In these early days we lived month by month and year by year without understanding the whole design. The creative numbers, the personnel, and the production of these first years were crude outlines of what grew more certain and more perfected as the seasons went on. But there were many moments of stretching against the bonds, and when I heard that Pavlova, in the days of Russia and Paris, danced only two or three times a week because her solos were so arduous, and that she was kept in cotton wool in the intervals, my self-pity and pride caused quite a stir. I said in a petulant, rather naïve way, "I wish I didn't have to dance more than three times a week and could be carried around on a cushion in between."

For the fact remains that better work and a higher grade of artistic excellence would be maintained if, between the necessary and thrilling tensions of our public performances, we were allowed greater periods to recuperate both our emotional and our physical energies. We have not yet any understanding of the best conditions under which to produce a great national art.

Ted and I never rested during these ten years and more of constant creating and constant teaching. Our principal concern was to raise the technical and artistic standards of our productions to a point not seen in America before. In this we were assisted wholeheartedly by clever and enthusiastic people. Musical composers and pianists, stage managers and technical people, resourceful students and our business staff, all worked according ■ their temperaments with a good will and efficiency. My father used to say that every chain is as strong as its weakest link. When bills mounted up, managers changed their minds and left us flat, sickness and war threatened, we were again and again brought back to the simplicities of faith and the vision of dear Mrs. Barrett, and her verse from Habakkuk abided ever in our inner shrine. Ted and



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I helped each other over the despairing hours when it seemed as though we could not go another step. I have lived to see artists and schools come up and flourish for a season and disappear into ineffectual, disillusioned lives, and I have known that it was not their talent that betrayed them, but that in some desperate hour of decision there was nobody near to hold up the arms of Moses.

I had emerged from the time when, as one critic said, "H. B. Harris found her art an expensive luxury," into this period when "she has come into her own and the applause of the average citizen, the regular theatergoers, the middle-class man and woman is sweet to her ears." Naturally this made me happy, but I knew, over and beyond my success as a performer, that I was now the mother of children, and the names of all of them were Denishawn.

By spring we were thinking and planning for the school. Our tenants, the Gish sisters and their mother, had moved on, and the work of a new year loomed up, thrilling and promising.



## CHAPTER XI: Pathfinders for the Dance: BY THE

second summer the school was on its way to becoming a national institution. Pupils began to arrive in such numbers that the simple dollar-in-a-cigar-box methods were inadequate, and at the suggestion of Margaret Loomis we engaged Mrs. Edwina Hamilton, one of the cleverest and kindest women I have ever known, to be manager of the school. Her daughter, our dear little blond Junie Rhodes, came along in the publicity department. We used to call her the "Mighty Atom," because, for her size, she could pack the greatest amount of mental dynamite that I have ever known. Her unflagging high spirits, her unbelievable cleverness in impossible situations, her unfailing determination to see things through and get them done were a part of the very fiber of Denishawn.

One of our pupils that second summer was young Martha Graham. She was exceedingly shy and quiet, with the same fascinating, homely face that she has today. Most of the time in my class she sat very still and listened. When she spoke it was only to ask an intelligent question. My direct work with Martha was very slight. She soon joined Ted's classes, and she owes her professional development to the deep concern and affection that Ted had for her during these early years. But she is kind enough to say that the influence of my personality and work was a large factor in her life.

In contrast to her natural diffidence were her tremendous bursts of vitality when she would sail onto the stage like a young tornado and vitalize the entire atmosphere. She worked long and thoroughly at any task that was given her, and in the end managed to give it her own coloring, as every artist does, and her own emotional values. ■ one saw Martha do a certain dance it was rendered innocuous and pale when any other girl attempted it. In all the dances that were given her she developed a vibrant combination of extreme temperament with a scholarly and painstaking technique.

On her human side Martha has always been an unfailing comfort to me. Whatever temperament may have been displayed on various

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occasions, the warm affection which we have for each other has never been disturbed. As the years went on, and her approach to the dance differed radically from mine, I could not approve of everything in her work, but she was a big enough person not to lay it against me! However, I am proud of her and deeply proud of her spirit of loyalty to her own ideals.

Many actresses from the films and the stage began to study at Denishawn. Ina Claire and Ruth Chatterton came; Lenore Ulric and Mabel Normand, Florence Vidor, Colleen Moore, and later Myrna Loy.

I was never a good teacher. Obviously I am too deep an egotist to have that particularly unselfish attitude toward a student which is the basis of the teaching genius. I did too much or too little. I made didactic statements when patient, explanatory ones were most needed. I confused rather than clarified, and someone's help was frequently needed to finish what I started. Sometimes an intelligent, eager student would go through my classes believing that she was to blame, that she was stupid or ignorant, whereas frequently the trouble lay with me. In these early days I plowed ahead with Ted's support, gaining a few teaching rudiments from him; for, unlike most creative artists, he had within him a manner of imparting something to a student clearly and quickly.

What I gave Denishawn, and what I shall give to pupils as long as I am able, is an artistic stimulus and an incentive to go and do something—anything—that is a release and a joy to the young artist.

During the continued energies and fun of this second summer a dynamic event pulled the school together into a more self-conscious entity. Our friend, William Dallam Armes of the University of California was still belaboring the trustees to open the Greek Theater to dancers. The paradox of closing a Greek theater to dancing left us aghast, but since its gift by William Randolph Hearst, several years before, only such luminaries as Sarah Bernhardt, Margaret Anglin, Maude Adams, and a few others had appeared on its stage. Nearly every time we met Professor Armes the problem came up again. He was making headway; but there were many false alarms before a wire came, announcing the fabulous news that the University was offering us the Greek Theater for a dance pageant.

Pandemonium broke out in the school. We were fully aware of the honor that had been paid us for, unlike the Metropolitan Opera House or other large and honorable temples of art, the Greek Theater could not be rented, and we were satisfied that our battering at its gates had

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broken one more shibboleth concerning the dance. The announcement from the University was gracious.

For the first time in its history, a dancer has been invited to give a performance in the Greek Theater, and the comments of the press of the country indicate that the honor was fittingly bestowed on Miss Ruth St. Denis, for she is generally recognized, not only as a dancer of marked individuality and ability, but as a creative artist, who has marked out many roads that others have followed.

The business of producing the pageant was a terrific affair, and of course every time Ted and I attempted to sit down and talk about it a class must be given, a telephone answered, or a friend seen. We were desperate, and finally Edwina arranged to lend us her little bungalow ■ Eagle Rock in the suburbs, and here for three days, cut off from everything and everybody, we planned the program of what we called *A Dance Pageant of Egypt, Greece and India*.

Dishes piled up, beds remained unmade, and dust gathered while we sat over the dining table debating whether the scene of suttee, the burning of the Indian widow, should be attempted or not. But the clarifying of our program was a very small item in comparison to our next task of organizing a ballet of one hundred. The rehearsals of individual episodes were immediately begun at Denishawn, but we had to undergo the expense of moving the entire school to Berkeley for final rehearsals.

The experience of these rehearsals is among the high points of my career. These joyous, work-filled hours with rehearsals going on, trunks open in the sunshine, and properties being made behind stage, while visitors strolled in from the University, gave one the curious feeling that the antique world hovered in the radiant sunshine. We could have been in a Greek theater in the ancient land.

The costuming alone was an immense task, and since Professor Armes was responsible for our good behavior we had to be doubly careful not to present anything that could offend the newly opened eyes of the University authorities.

In the Indian scene of the burning of the widow all went well during rehearsal up to a certain point. The property man had built me a grand funeral pyre, with a startling effect of fire achieved by red lights and streams of ribbon kept floating in the air by an electric fan hidden in its midst. Ted as my hunter husband had been laid by his pallbearers on top of this bier of burning wood. Amid great lamentations from the chorus of dancers I mounted the steps. This was my great dramatic moment and quite the climax of the Indian scene. The lights were all

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out except the red flare from what we fondly regarded as the roaring crematory fire.

In my death plastique I was to unfold the red sari which I wore and reveal my Indian nudity for one beautiful and awful moment. I had planned a flesh-colored undersari which would give a suggestion of nudity but would, at the same time, fail to arouse the apprehensions of the director. However, at this rehearsal I had dressed hastily and as the fire was flaming, the orchestra roaring, and I unfolding my red sari I discovered to my horror that I had left off the undersari and would in a second stand in nothing but my little silk fleshings.

I gave a cry and, gathering up my red sari, exclaimed under my breath, "Professor Armes will never stand for this!" The corpse gave a terrific heave, and began to laugh. I grew hysterical. The orchestra conductor wavered, and one or two of the company broke down under those lines which became a future classic in the realms of costuming. My laughter got the better of me, and I fell over Ted's body. The orchestra stopped playing entirely. Ted sat up and leaned over me while we roared together.

The pageant was presented on July 29, 1916, in an amphitheater crowded with spectators. The action was divided into three main episodes: a scene for Egypt, for Greece, and for India. Each had two sections, one devoted to the activities of life and the other to the life after death.

The sky on that July night was a deep electric blue, hung with thousands of stars. The eucalyptus trees stood in black silhouettes against the sky. The scene opened with fifty dancers in Nile green veils pouring down the incline which lay between the orchestra and the stage. They advanced with wavering movements, illustrating the inundation of the Nile, and when they finally reached the floor of the theater they mounted the steps and spread about the stage as does the Nile over the hot sands of Egypt. Then they receded in the opposite direction from which they had come, leaving two tiny fellaheen, those immortal hewers of wood and drawers of water that have inhabited the Nile valley for centuries, standing on an elevation.

These two little figures looked somewhat pathetic in their helplessness and gazed like children over the desert of Egypt as the river left them to their solitude. Ted and I, these Egyptian peasants, stood in the first movement of that little plastique which has been loved by thousands since, *The Tillers of the Soil*, and we waited for that breathless moment when the orchestra would resume the lovely strains of the Nile music. We felt the tension of the audience; we saw the radiance of the night

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and felt the extraordinary, vibrant beauty of this moment. We were humble and grateful at being allowed to bring the recreation of these ancient people to this receptive and enthusiastic modern audience, and for the joy of being pathfinders for the dance in high places in America.

It was certainly an artistic success, but because of my usual lack of business sense, and in spite of an audience of more than ten thousand, the production left us in debt. And what was the answer? *Vaudeville!*

This contingency always disturbed Ted more than it did me. He sometimes questioned whether this means of freeing ourselves from debt was worth the loss in artistic prestige which he believed accompanied the two-a-day. But to me debt loomed as a greater moral defeat than any hypothetical loss of prestige. Probably I believed in my own destiny too much to be greatly shaken.

We kept the school open that winter, leaving it in charge of Edwina and assistant teachers. This was the end, as I was to discover, of the carefree and joyful days of the St. Paul Street school, for during the winter tour Edwina sent us many and urgent telegrams saying that, since the next registration looked very good, she thought we would have to move into larger quarters, and suggested a place she had found near West Lake Park.

I demurred over this. I had the profound intuition that Ted and I were like the proverbial self-made man and his wife who struggled together in the early days of their career but from whom all joy fled when the complications of success descended upon them. I felt we were going too fast, and that if we did not watch out we would spend the rest of our lives in vaudeville, freeing ourselves from debt. But Edwina and Ted assured me that all big business was done by credit. So we gave this pretty name to our business methods, and waited to discover it was only another name for our old friend debt. And debt always was and always will be a mild form of dishonesty.

It is just at this point that I have a severe glimpse of my own character, because when reduced to its lowest common denominator I find that I do a lot of moralizing and then, in the end, give in with the furtive idea that I shall be very happy while enjoying the fruits of the other fellow's mistaken courage.

This means a ceaseless war between my ambition and my character. From the earliest days of my career I have been the beneficiary of a multitude of kindnesses from those who have believed in me. Artistlike, I have sought to justify these unpaid debts by the eternal argument that my art recompensed my benefactors and the world. For, mark you, the givers in this case are not complaining. They believe as the artist

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does; and sometimes, with equal dishonesty, they make their gifts in the hope of bathing in a reflected glory.

This may make for art, but it does not make for the purification of the soul.

I think that, to some degree, when we moved from St. Paul Street's simple school, where we did things for love of each other, love of the work, and love of the instruction, and began to be ambitious, a serpent entered our Eden. I sensed that this would be so, but I had not the strength of character to abide by my keener realization.

Edwina had found a really wonderful place, an old house with a tennis court and garden facing that lovely oasis in the middle of Los Angeles, West Lake Park. This time we not only built our dancing platform over the tennis court but put a great tent over the whole area, with a small auditorium at one end and dressing rooms at the other.

Here, with some of the advanced students as the ballet, Ted and I gave some amusing little evenings. Most of the artists and writers and motion-picture stars of Los Angeles came. As our audiences grew it occurred to us that we had the makings of a dance theater here under our tent. Meeting Norman Bel Geddes at this time, we interested him in our idea. He was just beginning his career. A really great artist and a dynamic and fiery young man, he was as full of ideas as an egg is of meat. We found him tremendously stimulating, and in spite of our highly explosive temperaments I think we could have worked together.

He made a charming sketch for a well-equipped small theater, to be remade from our present accommodations. We planned to do slightly more elaborate ballets, and all seemed to be going well when we struck an awful snag with the Fire Department.

The improvements they demanded were quite beyond our means, so our inspirations went glimmering, and Geddes inevitably drifted to New York, where his remarkable work, not only in the theater but in building and decoration, began.

During the summer, feeling the need to escape occasionally from the growing complexities of the school, we bought a small bungalow from Edwina, set among some pepper trees. It was out at Eagle Rock, and we called it Tedruth. It was a haven not only for us but for all our possessions, our books, the gifts given by friends and admirers. Every evening we were able to leave the tensions and personalities of Denishawn and find that Tedruth had a place for us under the trees to eat our supper, and to talk until the stars came out.

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In those sweet early days one of our visitors was Ted's adorable step-mother, Mabel Shawn. After Ted's own mother died Mr. Shawn had married again and this warm-hearted, tender person presided over the early days of Ted's difficult adolescence. Ted often used to speak to me of Mabel and here in these domestic hours I grew to know her well, and Mabel and I have remained always dear friends and splendid companions whenever we are together.

I was so grateful for this home, where we had our own kitchen, a sunny living room, pepper trees under which I could sprawl and read and, for a few brief hours, feel that I was not only a lover but actually a wife.

But what was smoldering in my artistic soul and which grew more accented day by day was the fact that there was no challenge in this atmosphere. There was no demand, such as one found in London or Berlin or Paris or New York, to do the finest thing of which one was capable. I had a sick feeling that something inside of me was being let down and down and down. It was not to be expected that Ted would share this feeling in quite the same way. At parties or musical evenings I was treated as something of a unique personality, a charming friend, perhaps, and someone who brought a little heightening of life to the occasion; but when someone across the room—a kindly, attractive singer, a well-known pianist—would shout, "Hello, Ruth, how are you?" something rose in me. Perhaps it was merely my egotism, but I think it was more than that. I had stood for something high and something powerful and now I was merely one of them. I knew this could not last forever.

One person who gave me this missing challenge was that strange, cynical, bitter man, that really marvelous soul, Cromwell Galpin. In times past he had fled from the life of a newspaperman and was now, like a Chinese sage, cultivating his garden and feeding his soul. With a hoe in his hand, he would call over from his yard and say, "Well, how's the queen this morning?" I knew that I had to deliver something that no one else in that neighborhood was asking of me. No half measure, no sentimentalities, "no mush of concession," as Emerson called it, was any good for Cromwell. Either I felt like hell and said so, or I felt gorgeous and he rejoiced.

It is strange how a man like this called out the strength in me. Our conversation was always unornamented; he could even tell me ribald stories, which I would not stand for from anybody else.

Here, in little Tedruth began that work which was destined to grow into a very beautiful piece of art—Ted's book, covering fifteen years



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of my artistic life, called *Pioneer and Prophet*. Mother had, over the years, managed to keep together, with incredible faithfulness considering our endless movings, a good heap of my photographs, and as she moved out of the picture Ted lovingly and with equal faithfulness took up this tremendous task. He not only got together and indexed all the photographs that were then in existence, but had enlargements made, corresponded with a number of my most famous photographers, made exquisite portfolios, and bought a fireproof trunk to put them in. This collection I have today, considerably enlarged. It was out of this pure labor of love that there grew this idea of adding text and making a fittingly beautiful book to enshrine those difficult and glorious years of my early career.

It took some three years to bring the book to completion; and during the period of the war and his service, Ted was working on the manuscript. John Henry Nash, that genius of a printer, and John Howell, the publisher, had listened very enthusiastically to Ted's idea of the book; and they set to work to make what I am sure was one of the most beautiful books of the season. The paper, with its deckled edges and its beautiful, carefully selected print; the large margins on the page; above all, the exquisite design for the head of each chapter by W. F. Rauschnabel, made the whole thing a treasure as well as a record.

This book has been a joy to libraries and to connoisseurs of both dance art and book art, and was for years the only gathered record of my career. It did not purport to be a biography, and was strictly confined to a record of the intense activities covering fifteen years. Ted put his best heart and brain into the making of this book; and if anything had happened to me at that time, it would have done great service to the world of the dance, and an equal service to the making of books in America.

During the months of preparation we met Bertha Pope, who has remained in our lives to this day. Bertha is a character. Albert Bender called her, for no reason that I know of, the Queen of Shodonia, meaning that she ruled not only over the principality of his heart, but over almost everyone with whom she came in contact. Besides all this, Bertha knew her English; and Ted, having met her not long before, got her to help him smooth out this earnestly but hastily written book, over which he had been allowed no time to brood. Bertha did that job, and did it well.

The title, *Pioneer and Prophet*, has caused considerable amusement and incredulity in the ranks of friends and dancers; and I rise to explain. Let us attack the word "pioneer" in a straightforward and

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head-on manner, and see where we get. If there are any dissenting voices, let them now be raised; for in one of the innumerable biographies I have written for my friends I have said that I would try to prove that I thought of everything first. One of my familiarly irritating habits, when told that such and such a form of dancing has been created or attempted by someone else, is to reply, "Oh, yes! Let me think—in 1910 I did that first in Vienna—" or "In 1916 Denishawn taught that technique for the first time in America."

So in claiming my share of the word "pioneer" I would like to state that at Twenty-third Street Proctor's I first opened vaudeville to the classic dance; at the Hudson it first invaded the legitimate theater; at Martin Leonard's open-air theater at Mount Kisco, in 1918, the modern world of out-of-door dancing began, followed by many performances in stadiums all over the country.

Ted and I danced on the water—a platform spread on a pool—at the Raymonds' lovely estate at Santa Barbara. To Ted I reluctantly yield the point that he was the first to dance in an interdenominational church in San Francisco, but since my intentions were identical I hastened to follow his example as soon as possible. With Duncan I share the honor of opening up conservative concert halls to the dance, and of dancing with symphonic orchestras.

I also have danced on the seashore and in the mountains. I think that covers the ground pretty thoroughly.

Now as to the "prophecy"—here I pause. I must believe or I should be no prophet. I believe my path of vision for the dance, in leaving the lowlands of mere aestheticism and entertainment for the clear, austere summits of spiritual revelation, will come to pass; not because I say so, but because the vertical line is always the line of progress. And on this prophecy I am perfectly willing to rest my case.

During these early days of Tedruth the persistent, gnawing terror of the war never left us. I knew, and Ted knew, that he would enlist, but it is difficult to put into words the subtle agony and weight of dread that possessed us. It challenged every last bit of our faith in the protection of Divine Love in both our lives, and again and again we would seek a moment together to read a verse or two from the Bible or bring a positive word to the awful negation of fear. And yet when Ted finally came home, an enlisted man, that terrible pride that comes over all women in the very midst of their dread took hold of me, and I thought with satisfaction that both my father and my husband were soldiers of their country. This strange atavistic response went hand in

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hand with my deep and passionate protests against the human waste and stupidity of the holocaust that was going on.

He left almost immediately for training camp, and I can see him now in his uniform, standing tall and pale and resolute near the car that was taking him away. We stood for a moment before the final good-by and last kiss, and said, "This is the test of all our faith, of all our love. Do we accept the appalling evidence of this war that is filling our minds with its sinister terrors, or do we stand on the side of God and the realities of the one Mind that we believe governs the universe?"

One may call it luck or coincidence, but in that dark hour of our lives Ted and I believed that our faith held and was manifested. He did go through a year or more of training, which to the artist was a purgatory in itself, but he did not have to share in that carnage abroad, and he did come back to me and to life.

And once more I can only return humble praise for this evidence of protecting love in an hour of human fear. Nevertheless the days and the weeks were filled with tension. Everyone's affairs were disrupted, but in some strange way a tremendous heightening of the forces of life took place; we felt new powers in the face of this disaster that we had not known before and rarely have known since. I realized then that one can never know his full capacity if creating in the face of a petty mortal image; but when a world is recreated, then we may feel again that cosmic thrill and dominion that the power of selfless spirit gives us.

Right here, for the first time in my life, I faced a world of people in a different relation than I had ever done before. I stood before them in hotel dining rooms, in bazaars, at rallies, as a woman loving her country, and eager to do what I could. I, too, had been caught in the mesmerism of war. As a metaphysician, I knew that it was mesmerism; but I did not then have the answer that I have now to my individual behavior. Night after night I made speeches about the holiness of the cause of the Allies, and the unholiness of the cause of Germany. I was deeply sincere and very successful; and I sold many thousand dollars' worth of bonds.

But the point was that for this brief time I was experiencing the tonic of disaster, a fact that made me afterwards ask the question, Shall we never draw upon the profound reserves of our being except under fear? I used to be told stories about the San Francisco fire, and the succeeding days, when that brotherhood that we waste so many millions of words on was actually achieved. The millionaire and the servant girl, the politician and the prostitute—all ate together, thankful

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that they had something to share, considerate of each other, and therefore knowing a new and extraordinary sense of liberated life. They used all things in common. But as their so-called normal life returned, all the old hatreds and possessiveness came back as well.

We barter our joy for a bank account, for a box in the opera, and for a new car. And only heaven may be had for the asking. In the simple act of the selling of these bonds I touched a great principle of selfless devotion to a cause outside my own personal orbits. When the inevitable reaction set in, when I again resumed the burdens of pride and possessions, I had learned one thing: having entered once a state of selfless devotion to a cause, I would forever after have this criterion.

I believe that instead of the tonic of war there lies in every living soul an ideal which can be as great a challenge to the ultimate reserves of his being. As we now work for war we can work instead for the building of this ideal, if once we find it. I believe that when Christ afforded us the ideal of the kingdom of heaven, He intended it to be this challenge.

Mother during this period had lost her health both mentally and physically. This was a source of intense sorrow to me, and we made her as comfortable as possible in a small sanitarium on the outskirts of the city. But her marvelous will, which had sustained her through her whole life, asserted itself again, and we soon moved her into a little apartment in Long Beach, where that strange, devoted little being we called "Calky" came to care for her. I can still see blessed Calky looking up into my face with her huge loving eyes and saying, "Ruthie, your mother is a saint. I live with her and I know."

For months Ted was in Camp Kearny near San Diego. We wrote constantly and I think the very depths of our love sustained us at this time in a more pure and unselfish way than ever before or since. He kept up an amazing responsibility for the school, coming up on Saturday afternoons to teach, and on Sundays. With Edwina's devoted help the organization was maintained at the high level to which Ted had raised it.

During this summer a person came to us who has since been acclaimed one of the finest dancers in America, Doris Humphrey. When Doris appeared for her first lesson in the little tent theater at West Lake Park she was a slender, prim young person, every inch the lady, wearing a preposterous pompadour and a bathing suit with a skirt, that daring costume which we had evolved for practice. She had come to us from Evanston, Illinois, where she had her own dancing school, in which a devoted mother helped her. But being a keen-minded young

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person and feeling that we Denishawns had some new note to add to her concept of the dance, she had packed a suitcase, and here she was.

Watching Doris day by day, seeing the clean-cut, lovely execution of her bar work and her freer, more individual movements during our school recitals, it began to dawn upon me that Doris was on the wrong track in clinging to teaching as the limit of her powers, and I said to her, "You should dance. You can teach later if you want to, but you have the makings of a real artist. Think it over."

She did, and she began her steady and inevitable rise.

Even though Ted was separated from me by the war he reached up from camp to perform another one of his devotional gestures to my career when he arranged to have young Allan Clark come out from Chicago to do a series of small figures of my dances. Ted had met him in the lobby of a theater during one of our tours. He was admiring our photographs, and Ted spoke to him. In his shy way Allan had said he was a Denishawn admirer, and was genuinely delighted to meet one member of the duo. We corresponded a little, and then Ted was seized with the idea of persuading him to inhabit the studio which he had arranged at the top of the West Lake building. There Allan did a number of delightful little statuettes, and he and I had enchanting times together. He was a long, rangy, dark-eyed youth with a slow, dreamy manner, impracticable as to collars and socks, his mind always pursuing a secret path. Yet he managed to convey much charm and a keen intelligence beneath his lethargy.

I think these West Lake days were the beginning of his deep interest in Oriental art. After years of struggle Marjorie, his wife, and he embarked for the Orient, and when he returned he immediately made his impression on the world of sculpture in America.

I always tried to communicate the virtues as well as the beauties of the East. I attempted, with some success, to make the pupils understand the inner stillness of the Orient, and I never lost a chance to expose them to its beneficent atmosphere. Swami Paramananada was now in California, and I asked him to come out to West Lake and chant some Sanskrit hymns for the school. The afternoon of his visit provided a disconcerting revelation of Western ignorance of the character and essence of the Orient.

The girls, when they heard he was coming, were all aflutter. They helped me to spread a large Oriental rug on the shining floor of the studio, and we all dressed in long afternoon gowns so as to give the occasion a certain formality. We left the upper end of the rug with a little cushion for the Swami, and the rest of us sat in a big semicircle

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at the other end. He came very promptly, salaamed softly ■ us as he passed with that lovely, silent walk of the East Indian, and took his place on the pillow in an attitude of meditation. He closed his eyes and folded his hands. The girls were, of course, all eyes and ears, eagerly waiting to receive his slightest word. He began to breath rhythmically, and a peculiar aura of peace emanated from him. We waited and nothing happened. The girls looked at me, and earnestly looked back at the Swami; and as precious seconds turned into minutes I began to laugh inwardly, because I could read their minds. The active, pert member of the class was saying, "Well, why doesn't he begin?" and furtively looked at her watch. "We've waited five minutes for him to say something." The meeker members were saying to themselves, "Yes, he is beautiful to look at. Strange how still he sits. But when is he going ■ begin?" The Swami sat on and on, and just as their impatience was becoming more and more pronounced an extraordinary tone came from his throat, the pronouncing of *Aum* (God) opened his prayer, and it was done with that extraordinary vibration which is like the striking of a great gong. It was deep and thrilling and seemed to sound throughout his whole body. Of course the girls did not realize that he was teaching them their first lesson of the East—patience, reverence, and humility—but I do not think any of them ever forgot the effect of that afternoon.

One day in the fall of this year Edwina came into my room at the top of the house at West Lake, and reaching up with her little hands—she was so short and I was so tall—she drew down my head and kissed me on the forehead. "The dear Father is gone," was all she said.

I think in that moment I grieved not for myself but for Father. His whole pitiful life of frustration, shot through with so many natural gifts, brought a poignant weeping of my spirit. Yet in some strange way I felt an intense relief, not because his physical suffering was at an end but because of something different, something deeper. "Now he doesn't have to fight God any more," I said to Edwina.

The service was held in the little chapel at Sawtelle, where the men he had loved so much and among whom he had been so happy could say good-by to him. I had written a few paragraphs, which I requested the chaplain to read, and in the very chamber of death my unquenchable sense of humor managed to function when I saw his expression as he unfolded my paper and began to read. It was totally unlike his conception of the last words of a daughter to her father, and it did not fit in with his Episcopalian sense of things.

I had written of my appreciation for Father's genius and his affec-

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tion for us all, and expressed my belief that this which he called his life was indeed but an unreal shadow which had been cast when he turned his back upon the light. I made no mention of his death, and this, I think, shocked the good chaplain more than anything. He somehow forced himself to read it to the end and then, quickly folding it, laid it aside with a "that's-that" expression of patient tolerance and went on with his idea of a service for the dead.

A little handful of Father's fellow veterans were there, men who had known his quick intelligence and delightful gift for storytelling, and I tried to thank them for their kindness and their friendship to him as we filed out into the brilliant California sunlight.

This war year seems filled only with personalities and not creativeness. At a lecture, one casual evening at Long Beach, I met that remarkable thinker and splendid prophet of greater human justice, Stitt Wilson. He was a very moving and effective orator. His influence over young men in colleges was tremendous. Not for years had I had such a "crush" on a man in public life. His spirit was so strong and fine and his effect upon my own rather bewildered and tremulous emotions so energizing that under the spell of his personality I was able to sell sixty-eight thousand dollars' worth of Liberty Bonds at the Alexandria Hotel.

Shortly after Ted went to camp I had expressed a desire to do something for his company and Ted assured me that the most appreciated service I could perform was in the line of food. So I arranged to send enough money once a week to provide a sausage-and-trimmings breakfast. For this simple deed I was made godmother of the regiment, and my photograph graced the messroom.

I went down often to see Ted and my godsons, the 158th Ambulance Company. I lived in a little outcamp and was beautifully cared for in a tent of my own.

Often Ted and I would leave the camp, hunting tarantulas in the sand by day and creeping out in the desert by night to lie flat on our tummies and listen to the coyotes and watch their lean, sinister figures move across the low horizon between us and the dark blue sky.

Ted, in spite of the work of evolving from a plain soldier to a second lieutenant, made his contribution to the camp by seeing to it that a number of performers came down to make evenings pleasant for the boys. Among those who responded were Carrie Jacobs Bond of blessed memory, and Mischa Elman.

In the heart of the "flu" epidemic I danced for the boys. It was a strange, weird experience, as though I were a being on another planet,

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for as I came up the steps of the stage, preparing to dance, a fearsome sight greeted my eyes.

The vast, shadowy parade ground was filled with thousands of men wearing white flu masks. It was like the Ku Klux Klan many times magnified. I was glad I was not a comedian who had to be funny in the face of this huge assembly. In some curious way the dance seemed more insular, more self-contained than the other stage arts.

The duties of the school were going on, but with them a mounting sense of the terror and uncertainty of the war. Any day Ted might be called. When I got back to West Lake, I found a release in taking up the necessary duties and small excitements of continuing the work. The costume department, both for the theater and in the school, was very near my heart, and this season we had enlarged it to take in a unique personality, Grace Ripley from Boston, who was a *couturière*, but also had a flair for the stage. To her a girl came one day, offering to join her sewing class if only she might somehow join the dancing class as well. This girl had the face of some medieval devotee and the heart of a neophyte.

She was Pearl Wheeler, whose very existence became part of the cement of that structure called Denishawn. For more than fifteen years she brought her great gift of design and costuming, with simplicity and complete devotion. Because all our temperaments were what they were, Pearl's loving heart was stretched on the rack again and again. But I never had and never shall have a fellow worker who so gladly received my ideas and translated them with such genius as Pearl. Had her lines fallen in different places, she would have been one of the world's great costumers, but underneath the incredible cleverness of her fingers lay a deep ambition, which, alas, the delayed training of her body did not allow her to realize. She wanted to be a dancer, and her specified talent for making exquisite costumes was only one design in the great pattern of her dreams.

At this time in Hollywood was an enchanted spot called Krotona. It was the headquarters of the Theosophical Society—the Annie Besant branch. Here, on the top of a hill, a real Indian house had been built. Mrs. Christine Wetherill Stevenson had come from Philadelphia to visit the Krotona Institute and Mr. Warrington, its head. Between them they conceived of religious festivals which would tell the life stories of the prophets. They settled on the story of the Buddha as the first. While I was on tour I received a wire from Mr. Walter Hampden who was to impersonate the Buddha, asking if I would do the ballet of the temptation scene.



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I leaped at the idea, and during the several weeks of rehearsal the experience became an increasing parallel of the one at the Greek Theater. It had a different spiritual environment, but that same sense of antique devotion to an art-worship.

Special music was written; several professional actors, besides Mr. Hampden, and many local amateur people were pressed into service for the large cast. Mrs. Stevenson built a special auditorium to face the lovely Indian house, so that the scenes in the early part of the play were performed in the compound of the house around a pool filled with lotuses. When the play opened and one sat in the auditorium looking toward the twilight sky and the white Indian house, flanked by cypress trees, one thought only of an old Indian miniature.

Doris and I made as delightful a ballet as we could for the temptation scene. I played the part of the astral body of Yashodara, the wife who, in the last desperate appeal of the heart, seeks in a lovely emotional plastique to bring the Buddha back from his austere heights to the warm loveliness of her arms. Doris gave a delightful dance interpretation of the god Kama.

Automobiles were not allowed to the extreme top of the hill, and those who came to see had to climb. Since it was a religious play the wiseacres predicted we would last about three nights, but at the end of five weeks we were still going strong.

Among the by-products of this experience were some heavenly photographs by Arthur Kales, and a delightful friendship with Mr. Hampden and with Mr. Warrington and his little daughter, Neeley, of whom I became very fond. The play was repeated later in Mr. Hampden's own theater in New York, and I had the pleasure of repeating the ballet for this same scene.

I saw a great deal of Mrs. Stevenson after this. She was a remarkable woman, a really creative patron of the arts. Shortly after the play closed she became interested in a great canyon back of Hollywood. She and Dr. Gerson and several others formed a committee, of which I was a member for a short time, to obtain these forty acres for a festival ground where large productions and symphonies could be given. It became known as the Hollywood Bowl.

Later some disagreement with the policy of the Bowl caused Mrs. Stevenson to go across the road and buy a smaller canyon, where she presented the now famous Pilgrimage Play. Not only were her cultural activities in California considerable but she maintained her interest in the Art Alliance of Philadelphia, which she had founded

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and of which her brother, Colonel Wetherell, was president for a number of years.

In the fall of 1918, after creating and appearing in a dance for Gluck's *Orpheus* at the Greek Theater at Berkeley, I gave up all artistic activities and engaged only in war work. But the result was that in the enthusiasm of my selling I persuaded myself to buy so many bonds that the vaudeville, which I thought was forever behind me, loomed up again. Before the tour started, however, November 11, 1918, threw us all into a delirium of joy and relief. Everyone rushed into the streets to spread abroad the blessed news that peace had come. Mother announced, in spite of our protests, that she was going downtown with me to celebrate.

She had been very ill and she was frail even then, but her marvelous spirit was as strong as ever. So we dressed her in her best little frock and hat and gloves, and started for the city. The streets and sidewalks and the windows were bursting with shouting, laughing, gesticulating people. The din was awful, and I held tightly to Mother who was enjoying the excitement hugely and exclaiming every now and then, "Dearie, this is exciting, but the good part is that that awful thing has stopped." We stayed perhaps an hour, and then I thought she was growing tired. Somehow we managed to elbow our way out of that closely packed humanity and get a taxi for home.

Oh, the wonderful comfort to our hearts to know that peace had come again, and yet, long ago, Buddha said, "Hatred never ceases by hatred, but only by love."

Another tour started before Ted's demobilization. As soon as he was free, he took a train East and we met in Detroit. It was midnight, and only with some difficulty had he caught up with my train. He woke me up out of sleep with his dear, eager face bending over to tell me that he was free.

He traveled with me for some weeks, and most of that time we talked. I had become possessed with the idea that I must come out from under the burden of the school. This was one of those times when I was feeling the urge to reach higher levels of creativeness, and the incessant needs of the school and the repetitious seasons were getting on my nerves. I was well aware of the fact that certain areas of my mind had gladly planned this school with Ted, and I was equally aware of the unreasonableness and apparently temperamental attitude that I assumed from time to time regarding both the school and our vaudeville engagements. From a business and institutional point of view these outbursts were completely out of order. They caused Ted and

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Edwina and June endless anxieties and bewilderments. To them I was selfish and unreasonable; I was refusing to finish a course of action I had started. But stronger than their amazement was my own sense of destiny, and the reverberations of my creative life reaching down to me from the days of my solo career.

For I was definitely on my way, groping, stumbling, causing myself and others much pain and unhappiness, toward an unknown goal. We must remember that always what I did externally, whether my own personal ballets or the organization of the school or the manifestation of our joint company, were bypaths of a spiritual road which was to carry me irresistibly forward.

As a dancer, as the copartner of the school, Ted had brought his youth, his talent, and his loyalty into my life. It is a curious paradox that I have nothing but profoundest gratitude for everything that Ted meant to me then, or for what his extraordinary personality has taught me over the years. And I shall always regard him as one of the truly significant figures in the world of American art. But the elements of his own being could not complement the psychic forces in me that needed to be fulfilled, nor did he release that peculiar and individual talent which had been mine from the beginning. On the contrary, my years in the school and the seasons with the company and the creative work that was done during that period were, with few exceptions, of a lesser quality than had been done before.

As I say this, it would appear that I am making Ted responsible for these years of unfulfillment. But how is that possible? How, in the end, can we possibly hold anyone responsible for our own undeveloped vision, or undeveloped strength of character?

Ted's clever thinking and greater capacity for institutionalism saw that for the school, and the performances growing out of the school, a long term—a five-year plan—was necessary. But whenever the subject was broached I would grow panicky, and fight intuitively against his perfectly sane and tenable ideas, fiercely protecting something, I know not what, which could not fit into the routine of the school and the moneymaking of the tours. Of course I was a divided consciousness, and I wore everyone out with my inconsistencies, and caused real sufferings, emotional and financial.

Ted, as a sometimes bewildered fellow artist and frequently distracted husband, tried unflinchingly to get some order out of chaos for me, and to provide me with as much liberty as possible. At the same time he knew that I would probably need the framework of the school for my work. When we returned to Los Angeles he disposed of the large

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buildings at West Lake, and retained only a small house on Sixth Street. There he had one pianist, and Martha Graham as his assistant teacher.

Deep within him I imagine Ted felt a certain release also from the complexities of the school. His own creative powers were beginning to assert themselves with fresh impetus. That he was obeying the natural law of progression, that his interests should also be withdrawn from our intense partnership and centered upon the ideas and energies stemming from his own personality, were incontestable.

Left free at last, my mind was turning in a thousand different channels, trying to find the outlet that I knew would open up my new life in the dance. One afternoon, on the lawn of an estate where some of our girls were taking part in a charity benefit, I suddenly caught a glimpse of what I was looking for.

One of our dancers, a rich girl with very little talent and a great deal of assurance, clad in an expensive but irritatingly unauthentic Nautch costume which she had had made without my consent or control, was performing. As I watched her, latent feelings regarding the dance suddenly leaped into action. This all seemed so messy to me, so confused and inadequate. Up until now we had been forced to let the individual students express themselves on such programs as they chose. To some degree this still had to continue, but then and there was born in my mind an idea which did not emerge full blown until a year later. The underlying motive of this idea was a nonracial, impersonal form of the dance as the visualization of great music, and was more truly representative of the school than the form we were then expressing.

That summer Constance Smedley and her husband, Max Armfield, arrived in California, and an event took place which was the first of a series of extracurricular, extracareer activities for me.

I have always had an urge to act, quite apart from my dancing. Years ago in London Constance and I, loving the biblical possibilities of drama, had spoken briefly of the character of Miriam, since she, too, was a dancer. Now they had finished a play which they called *Miriam, Sister of Moses*, and what should one do in California but produce it?

To Constance the play was partly Miriam and partly me, so I doubt if she would have attempted it if I had been unable to take the role of Miriam. But the prospect of giving the vitality of rhythm and music and speech to Constance's lovely lines and Max's stunning production was not to be denied. Their conception was very beautiful and dramatic,

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and the authorities of the University of California became so interested in it that they offered us the Greek Theater.

The drama centered on Miriam's and Moses' life after the escape from Egypt. Moses had married a heathen wife, according to Miriam's orthodox ideas, and her jealousy burned within her so fiercely that it was manifested as leprosy on her body. This was the theme of the play, and through its five acts it was expressed with great power and beauty.

Ted was pressed into the part of Moses at short notice, much against his will. His real contribution to the production was his superb dance choreography for the ballet. I had nothing to do with this, having my hands full in learning the long lines of the play. In all my acting the learning of lines is unadulterated torture. Invariably after an opening night my kind friends will murmur, "You were splendid, Ruth, just splendid, but I suppose in a few days you'll have your lines down better."

Sam Hume directed the production, Max superintended every costume and did miracles with unbleached muslin, Constance sat quietly in her chair behind Hume, Ted climbed interminable ladders behind the set and appeared suddenly as Moses on the top of the mountain—a moment of real triumph, especially when the spotlight played upon him; and I did a series of out-damned-spot scenes down in the sands of the theatrical desert. Of course the Lord healed me after I repented good and plenty, but this, of course, was not until the end of the play.

The full effect of the production was striking and effective to a degree. The musical score, composed by Professor E. G. Stricklen of the University of California, was not only a splendid support for the play and the ballets, but a beautiful piece of writing as well.

When we returned from Berkeley we lived again at Tedruth and our staff settled in a house we had bought up the road, called The Compound. As Denishawn was closed, and Ted wanted to make enough money to finance a solo concert tour, he took an old building on Grand Avenue in Los Angeles. It was in great disrepair, having been the scene of various art experiments, and with no money to speak of he set about renovating it. He took on Margerie Lyon as manager, who in the future was to serve the whole institution in a startling variety of responsible roles. She had a clever and agile mind, and a great flair for what was smart and timely. She became one of the real buttresses of Denishawn. Casting about for means of giving distinction to the old building, they commissioned Buk-Ulrich to do an Egyptian Hall. A young and talented decorator, Robert Law, helped them turn

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a florid ballroom into a eucalyptus-green and gold studio theater, and to create two stunning black drawing rooms.

These rooms were the scenes of many parties. Anna-George and William de Mille, and their talented daughters, Agnes and Margaret, came to all our performances and parties, and we in turn went to lovely dinners at the De Mille home.

I remember one especially, when Eva Gautier sang her Oriental songs. I have never been so stimulated by an evening of singing as I was by these weirdly beautiful songs of Burma or Java, which no other artist in America can express with the same finished artistry.

That partly genial, partly taciturn character, William de Mille, and I were always a little edgy with each other, but invariably emerged from the evening entertained and stimulated. Anna-George, the delightful hostess, was my sympathetic friend and has always remained so. Agnes' interest in dancing blossomed in an enchanting way. I think she has done a unique thing in the world of the American dance, and I am one of her genuine admirers.

I think we had become by now a recognized part of the cultural life of Los Angeles. The various semiprofessional, semisocial gatherings in the big studio were always attended by the intelligentsia. The musicians of the city were cordial and appreciative. Charles Wakefield Cadman and Homer Grunn were working at this time on music for two of Ted's American ballets and were producing striking results.

My beloved Ada, the Countess de Lachau, lent a great distinction to the parties; and Baron de Meyer, who had made so many stunning photographs of me, brought a quick, nervous aliveness; while his baroness, with her close-cropped hair and grand manners, drew everyone's eyes when she came into a room.

For a time we rented the black drawing rooms to one of the most interesting men I have ever known, the philosopher Manly P. Hall. He was in the throes of writing his great work, *The Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Cabalistic, and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy*. With its remarkable illustrations it stands as a solitary textbook in its field. Later Mrs. Hall became interested in my religious dances, in both their traditional aspects and their metaphysical possibilities. They had established their center in California, and very soon the first unit of their philosophic headquarters had been built. The Halls and I, over the years, have had many exciting discussions, and it is at the back of all our minds to collaborate someday on a ballet or a pageant that will reveal the common basis of wisdom which unites all religious beliefs.

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Madame Galli-Curci and her husband, Homer Samuels, were friends of Ted, and I met them at this time. Madame was planning to play *Butterfly* at the Metropolitan and, knowing my interest in Japanese things, she commissioned me to find her a wig with all its appurtenances and other accessories, so that she would be properly costumed for the part. I went down into the Japanese section and enlisted the services of a Japanese salesman, and slowly, because one does not do these things in a rush, we got together the imposing wig and its necessary hairpins, the little purse to be carried in the obi, and other properties, and sent them to her in New York. I received a lovely letter of gratitude from her, and then I dismissed it from my mind. Months later, to my unspeakable joy, a package arrived from Barcelona and in it was my first Spanish shawl, a lovely creation with scarlet roses over its white ground. I wore it and danced in it for many years, always remembering the exquisite thoughtfulness of the giver.

I do not remember when I first met that delightful artist-actor, Henry Miller. I saw him on several occasions backstage when Blanche Bates was playing in *The Marriage of Convenience*, at other times when Ruthie Chatterton was playing *Come Out of the Kitchen* (Ruthie and I have been friends for years through our mutual love, Aunt Ada), but my special remembrance of him was the time he visited the Grand Avenue studio.

Ted's class was in progress on the floor and Henry Miller and I were in the little balcony. He sat with his arms crossed on the balustrade, and his chin on his arms, gazing at the work of the dancers on the large shining floor below. They had been going through their technique class for some time, and we were both watching it intently. Then Ted told them to sit down for a moment as he had some particular instructions to give them, and I can see their eager faces as they listened to his explanation of a point in technique.

I had become gradually aware that Miller had not moved his head and I was a little embarrassed, thinking perhaps he was bored. After a few moments of silence I looked at him, and to my amazement tears stood in his eyes. As he felt my gaze he turned and said, "In my world we do not have this devotion. Every season young people come to me with letters of introduction or of their own volition, seeking jobs, but they have no equipment. They look at me in amazement and a little resentment when I tell them that something more is needed than a lovely profile and an ability to wear evening clothes. I deal with the theater as a market place. You are dealing with the dance as a devotion."

My memory of the Grand Avenue studio and all its under- and

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overtone is of life illuminated to a great intensity of feeling and output on all planes. Grand Avenue has both triumphant and tragic memories for us all. There were large classes and rehearsals, and various personalities emerging from the activities of the students. And above all was the human drama between Ted and me working itself out.

Two basic elements in our relationship that, in spite of our love for each other, made our separation inevitable were our artists' egotisms and our emotional dissonances.

All artistic temperament, I sadly believe, contains within itself the frustration of human relationships. That tragedy may be outward and obvious, or inward and subtle, but tragedy it is bound to be.

I was born with a passionate nature; that is, I took all the hurdles of life with intensity and enthusiasm. I went at everything with such vehemence that I often met head on with the immovable object of another's ambitions and temperament. Then there were bewilderments and tears and hot resentments.

My terrifically strong will and my immense joy in the whole round of nature and art, coupled with an appalling unintelligence at times, have brought me to many a terrible impasse bordering on tragedy, for I have never achieved a reconciliation between my life as an individual artist and my heart as a woman. In this fact lay the seeds of personal sorrow.

By now Ted was growing restless of being forever coupled with me, both in performance and in the mind of the world, and the constant preference of the public and the critics for my work was creating a limiting and unjust attitude toward Ted's artistic growth.

A solo tour was growing more and more definite in his mind. Part of me was glad, truly glad, to have him try his own wings but, deeper still, the other part of me was glad because I now foresaw that I would be free to pursue that destiny that my conscience told me I had abandoned.

A deeper question even than our artistic dissonances was the perpetual fact that my three gods could not dwell together. I must make my obeisances to one god at a time; otherwise they destroyed me. Each god jealously demanded my entire obedience, affection, and strength.

Art, religion, and love: what a glorious and divergent trinity! In the unseen realm these are one, and their name is the realization of life, the perfect kingdom within—Nirvana. But in time and space they are seemingly irreconcilable. My spiritual devotions, had I allowed them, would have absorbed me completely. At that time I should have been a good Scientist; I should have belonged to the church; I should



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have been a worker in a cause to which I was devoted. But this cause would have allowed me little energy, and no devotion for my god of love and my god of art. Obviously I could not pursue a career and be the artist I was without a constant attendance at the feet of beauty—practical, day by day labor, sacrifice, and identification. As for my god of love, what shall I say?

As wholeheartedly as I could I helped Ted with his program. He was planning a vaudeville ballet to be sent on tour, called *Julnar of the Sea*; he was also creating an elaborate dramatic ballet based on a Toltec legend, called *Xochitl*, which he would dance with Martha Graham; he was conceiving his American suite. But I, when I had finished giving whatever suggestion or advice Ted desired, had no further share in his productions. This I understood and accepted. But I also felt an emotional separation which was not so easy to define. With some shock I realized that I was not in any formal sense of the word either wife or partner now. My unresolved status left me with a feeling of unfulfillment, and my restless energies went seeking an outlet, artistic as well as emotional. When Ted left the school for his tour I was still at loose ends, not so much in school plans, which I resumed in his absence, as in those deep fibers of my being.

One evening in the black drawing room my beloved friend, Sol Cohen, and Anne Thompson McDowell, that delightful accompanist who had been with us for some time, and dear old Edmund Russell, come out to California to recall to me the days of early struggles, and Edgar Hansen, the young composer, and best of all Patsy Donner, now a full-fledged dramatic actress, found ourselves in a mood of relaxation. Anne was accompanying Sol's beautiful violin playing. Sol had a way of improvising when he was with friends that was more emotional and stirring than any violin music I know. As we continued they modulated into the *Liebestraum*, and I began to move to it in a perfectly simple way. Later Edmund told us some little Indian anecdotes concerning jewels, and then we begged Pat to recite a poem or two. It was a lovely evening. As we parted I said, "Let us meet again next Thursday evening, and everybody bring a friend."

For over a year we did this, until on the final evening we had more than two hundred guests. There were singers and players and other dancers; and dear old Edmund, still giving us readings from the Orient; and Anne, still making witty remarks between her numbers. The point of it is that through my own need others were released to express themselves before a sympathetic audience, without the encumbrance of money or price.





Two men in suits standing in front of a large, ornate classical building with columns.



A large, ornate classical building with columns. A person is standing in the foreground, looking towards the building.

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But still the deeper portions of my heart were unsatisfied. My work as an artist, my life as a woman wove themselves in and out of my consciousness until my entire motivation became obscured.

In the midst of all these vague dissatisfactions there swung into my life a man of such quality of nature, such a beautiful sensitivity of heart, demanding nothing but understanding the real need and emptiness of my emotional life, that I fell in love with him. As usual my love was romantic rather than sensual. We met only three or four times, and all that passed between us were a poem, a letter, a page of music, a ride in the night to visit a friend outside of Los Angeles, a train letter which began, "Farewell, my heart." Having no outlet of expression, bound in on all sides, the potency of this love lasted me for seven years.

One rare and unforgettable evening we motored down to the sea, and on a cliff overlooking a moonlit ocean we stood in the most exquisite moment of sheer romantic beauty that I had ever known, and he murmured against my hair, "The wind-swept crests remain forever, and the dawn never fails."

An almost tragic episode occurred as a result of these unresolved days and self-pitying nights. It was four o'clock in the morning. I was pacing the floor of a bungalow outside of Los Angeles, waiting for Pearl to come from another city. She was bringing me a message from him.

I knew perfectly well that what I was doing was no answer to my soul's cry. I knew that it was merely a sweet drug to still the pain, and that my cure lay at a deeper level than he could ever reach. Yet on this night it was necessary that I hear from him, and loving Pearl had gone to act as intermediary. She should have arrived at midnight. Since then I had moved about restlessly, with a nagging conscience and the cold fear that something had happened. Finally, after long hours of terrible waiting, Pearl staggered into the room with a cut and bleeding face, white as death and just able to stand. There had been a motor accident. Caught between the gears of two selfish lives, she had almost paid with her own life.

Here I saw my own passionate willfulness and desire externalized, and it struck my heart with repentant pain. This was the nearest outward tragedy that occurred from these efforts of mine to break through the order of marriage, without the honesty and dignity of divorce.

These things are concerned with living people, and each story, could it be told, would hold within itself a tale of yearning and frustration.

There are other views, other ways of looking at this unfolding of

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my love path. I was to many men a symbol of some indefinable element of life which was more and less than a woman. I mean that they regarded me as both less than the woman they could love, and infinitely more. This period began a series of broken relationships which meant futile and unhappy hours both to the man involved and to myself, and there seemed no way to dispose of all this misery save on the grounds of sheer wickedness on my part. Yet I knew this was not really so, and so did the man.

I am thinking of a lovely moment on the hills beyond the city. The man was older and more steadied in his life than the others were. He had brought me here to see the valley in the moonlight, and if his eyes should fall upon this page he will remember this night with joy, I have no doubt. Stopping the motor, we stood gazing over the valley. Then he moved in his slow manner around the front of the car, where I stood breathless in the moonlight, and he said, "Those letters that you sent . . . they were not love letters; they were love scriptures, and they are free from all hurt to anyone."

Once a friend called me after hearing of some new affair of the heart, some minor comedy or near tragedy, *Une grande armoureuse*. How clear are the two sides of this ancient shield: one the woman incapable of fidelity, having an endless procession of unresolved affairs, committing, from a Christian point of view, many sins and therefore worthy only of deepest condemnation; the other side of the shield, the long pilgrimage for love, a great search that will never end until the goal is reached.

Idealists in love are always tragic figures. For they are not willing to accept the compromise, the comfortable habit, the half gods. They demand the full measure of joy.

I think Ted secretly knew of this continual and restless search for love, and was afraid of it. It would appear that he gave all that he could and I was still unsatisfied. Certainly as wife I was acting reprehensively. I was totally in the wrong. I did not deserve the understanding and the love that he tried to give me. There were hours when his patience reached the limit, but the fact remains that I was unhappy with him. Why I was unhappy was because I was demanding of life what I was not able or willing to give, and Ted was a symbol of my own fears, my own egotism, and my own love-pride. It took me to the end of the long chapter, face to face with utter loneliness and defeat, before the answer came.

Remembering that the forces of this conflict inevitably express

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themselves in some outward force, it is perhaps not surprising to find these simple words in my journal, "Little Tedruth is in ashes."

To me this was the symbol of the end of Ted's and my purely domestic relationship. My soul suddenly became naked and I saw how bound around it had been with fears and the things of the world. I wrote in my journal:

The fuse from a gas burner catches fire and burns a home. What is that to me? Perhaps a benefit in that I am obliged to tighten up the girdle of my spiritual loins and work harder to keep what is my birth-right: love, beauty, life.

Directly across the street from the smoldering ashes of little Tedruth was The Compound and it at once gave us shelter.

Ted was stricken by the loss of our library—a famous collection of dance and costume books—of our Oriental draperies, our bronzes, pictures, costumes, scenery, orchestrations. Our friends all expressed their sorrow and their sympathy; my old friend, Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney, sent a loving letter and a generous check (while Mrs. Whitney's devotion and help to the graphic arts is well known, I can testify again and again to her patronage of the dance).

The next few months were a period of greater restlessness than ever. I lived for months more or less alone in this house while Ted took up the business of the Grand Avenue studio. Occasionally my solitude was broken by a student or a friend coming to visit me. Among those who brought me real joy was that unique character, Dane Rudyahr. I can see the two of us over one of my housekeeper's, Mrs. Stratton's, delicious dinners, earnestly discussing phases of mysticism, certain aspects of the Theosophical Society, and of course—since he was a composer—ever-present music. Rudyahr and I have remained not only good friends but a real stimulant to each other through the years.

But in the midst of all this I felt curiously detached after my first shock and grief were over. I accepted it as a challenge to my way of thought, and under its sudden discipline my artistic life steadied. And that concept of the dance as musical visualization, with its impersonal emphasis on form, was thrown up into the surface of my mind and began to take definite shape.

It led me away from my personal art out into the nonracial, abstract fields of expression, and I organized a group of my girls, headed by Doris Humphrey, to work along the lines of ensemble. Doris, with Claire Niles as our first interpreter, was really my cocreator. Even then,

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she took certain ideas and carried them into a more complicated and finer form of choreographic expression than I was capable of.

In our first number, the Beethoven *Sonata Pathétique*, which we developed together, I am content to rest my claim that we began the first suggestion of what has become the American dance, that dance which owed everything and nothing to Europe and Asia. We became for the first time simple instruments for music to play upon. When the curtain rose on the sonata the girls were standing in the upper left-hand corner in a group, with Doris as the spearhead. They were relaxed, arms at the sides, and heads slightly drooped in an attitude of tacit expectancy. With the first beautiful chord of the sonata they took a short step forward, raised their arms from the shoulders, and with heads thrown back, made the first gestures of the dance.

The costumes were neutral in color, reaching nearly to the knees. They were of no specific derivation, but served the purpose of clothing and revealing the body with utmost simplicity. Each girl was told in no uncertain terms that her personality counted for nothing. She was a member of a group, and the business of that group was to do two definite things: to reflect in as faithful a manner as possible the tempo, rhythms, and structure of the music, and to see that the patterns, space coverings, and groupings were as beautiful as possible.

Through all this I was feeling my way toward a better understanding of music. Not being a musician, my understanding of its techniques had been given me by Louis Horst and Ted. Ted's grasp of a piece to be danced is instantaneous and true, and of course Louis' fine musicianship helped me to become aware of a thousand nuances of structure and coloring before which my Oriental simplicities seemed a little naïve.

However, as I look back I see that these "concert dances," ■ I called them, were but forerunners of a much deeper relation of music and the dance. The indication of this newer form came several months later in Canada. Like living in Brooklyn, vaudeville was the punishment for sins committed in a former life, and I found myself one spring day in a railway hotel in Edmonton, Alberta, that remote point in the north where we could see the aurora borealis.

The three or four performances a day were slowly wearing me out, and I was feeling rebellious toward life and commerce. One afternoon June was at the theater and I was alone. A lovely English tea and a gorgeous sunset relieved my depression somewhat and, lying down on my bed for a rest, I suddenly drifted on such a wave of creativeness that I could no longer lie supine. I jumped up, seized some paper

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and a pen, and spent the next hour putting into a letter ■ Ted my idea of a synchoric orchestra.

Two or three years before, I had seen Isadora Duncan dance again. As usual she had stimulated me, but this time I also noticed her weaknesses. As I watched her dancing Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony* I noticed that she stopped when the music became too complicated for the dance, and compromised by making one of her unforgettably noble gestures in complete disregard of the music.

The audience was enraptured, and I am sure most of the unthinking ones felt they had witnessed a wonderful piece of musical visualization, but that was exactly what they had not seen. She had interpreted and had reacted to the strains of this exquisite symphony, but she had in no way maintained a consistent visualization of its structure or rhythm.

I sensed this vaguely at the time, but not until this afternoon in the hotel at Edmonton did the solution dawn upon me—an orchestra of dancers which visualized an orchestra of music.

Ted replied to my letter most enthusiastically and said that when I returned home he would have sixty of his students waiting for me ■ experiment on. I was naturally very impatient to reach Los Angeles, and when I got there I immediately went to work in Ted's studio, with his pupils and Louis Horst.

We worked four hours a day for two months, and the time flew by. Louis and the pupils responded enthusiastically to the new idea. Its explanation sounded simple and basic: in order faithfully to visualize a symphony, the same multiple values in movement must be received by the eye as tonal values are by the ear, and the dancers, in orchestrated embodiment, must parallel the instruments of the symphony orchestra. The execution of this fine theory was another matter. To listen patiently to the symphony, selecting and comprehending the themes, and after that to listen to the individual notes played by each instrument; to correlate the various groups and solo parts into a logical and beautiful identification with the separate instruments, proved a gigantic task. But it grew more fascinating as we went on. My fear that the girls would become bored with this abstract approach to music and form was happily dissipated. Their intense interest carried them from one day to the next, and there was no longer one person with a vision, but several individual choreographers.

Mr. John Martin, in his book *The Modern Dance*, says that synchoric or musical-instrument ballet, was being performed by the Dal-



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croze school in Germany at this time. If this were so I can only answer that my father, who was an inventor, used to say that men often invented the same thing at the same time, though miles apart and in no communication, as the patent office will testify. Though in the early days we had had a teacher who gave us the rudiments of Dalcroze, I had heard no mention of a synchoric orchestra, and my conception of it derived straight from Isadora's dancing of the Schubert *Unfinished*.

At the end of two months our production was ready—or rather, I should say, the first movement was ready. By this time I was very eager to confess that the facile task which I had imagined had turned into a gigantic and thrilling labor that challenged our musicianship at every point, and if it had not been for Louis' unflagging help we would never have gotten beyond the first two bars. We called it the "synchoric" orchestra, a word coined by Ted, and meaning an ensemble of movement, as symphonic suggests an ensemble of sound.

I gave two receptions, one for musicians and music critics of Los Angeles, and the other for dance lovers, artists, and art patrons. On the first occasion the dancers were in black bathing suits. On the second, I made an interesting experiment with color, putting the brasses in yellow, the cellos in blue, the flutes in green, and so on. Years later, when we did it at the Lewisohn Stadium, I experimented still further and the dancers were dressed in many shades of one color.

In my presentation talk I said that one of the uses to which the relation of dance and symphonies could be put would be the liberation of our dance thinking into new and enlarged ensemble ballets.

Music, I said, both liberates and confines. It is both a help and a hindrance. This group of instrumentation dances, or my synchoric orchestra, was submitting itself to music for a season in order to discover what forms of composition were sympathetic to the best interests of the dance, and what were the limitations imposed by music. I claimed that the dance was an independent art and should eventually discover for itself two things: first, new structures for the purely visual dance; second, new forms of music that would bring a greater liberation to large ensembles than the present classicism allowed.

With Louis at the piano we then demonstrated what was probably the first symphonic dancing in this country, a treatment of large ensemble work that has since influenced the entire dance world.

In the audience was that sympathetic critic, Bruno Ussher, who had always followed our doings with much moral support and enthusiasm. In a review in *Saturday Night* he wrote:

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Ruth St. Denis, among latter day dancers one of the most creatively artistic and spiritual, has gone among the "conductors." Yet she uses no baton in leading her "synchoric orchestra." It is her vision of the ideal dance that guides this ensemble of fifty or sixty dancers. It has always been a distinguishing characteristic of her productions that they were propelled by an inner force, and regenerated by the members of the ensemble who have caught her vision, rather than by a visible leader. A true sign of an inner grace.

In the "synchoric orchestra" every instrument or group of instruments in Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony* has been represented by one or more dancers in a vast ensemble. Every theme, rhythm, tempus and dynamic expression of the various string, woodwind, brass and percussion instruments is represented in an ideal polyphony of movement. It is true music visualization of the highest order, an ideal incarnation of the spirit of the symphonic music.

At no other time in the history of American or European art has the tendency towards symbolism been so strong. It is easy to understand that the St. Denis dancers have in the past emphasized the symbolic element more strongly than the music. For the sake of cultural evolution it was well so. But there was no doubt that such artists ■ Ruth St. Denis, striving ardently for the perfect correlation of all the arts would presently treat music in this subtle inter-dependence of the muses.

To the composer the synchoric orchestra will prove a new channel of expression. From the synchoric orchestra performance only one more step is needed to the ultimate level of the dance, when music will be written for the dance, rather than the dance be adapted to the music. What Wagner did for the music-drama or opera, to use a more conventional term, will have to be done for the dance.

After these performances everyone was either very sympathetic or very antagonistic, and I spent two weeks running around Los Angeles trying to persuade someone to produce the synchoric properly with an orchestra. But, sad to relate, most Los Angeles musicians merely looked at me and sadly shook their heads, saying, "There may come a time when a symphony can be danced, but that's a long way off."

It took ten years for orthodox musicians to accept it.

Meanwhile I was very busy with my experimentation with another element of music, poetry. I was anxious to establish its relationship to the dance. The mating of poetry and rhythm has been from time immemorial an element of ancient beauty. And it seemed to me that in the midst of a mechanical civilization we should deliberately lean away from the mechanization of the arts and do everything in our power ■ keep them free and individual.

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I planned a little series of dance, poetry, and music to be done in intimate surroundings, and my good friends, Ingersen and Dennison, as they were affectionately called, asked me to open their new hostelry, called The Samarkand.

The Samarkand deserves a story all to itself. It was in Santa Barbara, and was formerly intended as a school for boys. Of Persian architecture, it was built at great expense by a man who believed in forms of education which shot off at right angles from the orthodox. He also believed ardently in peace. His school was barely finished when he said something about peace which roused the ire of the government, and all his activities ceased.

When Ingersen and Dennison took over the property they turned it into one of the most charming inns of California. It had an assembly hall and a little stage, and here, in the exquisite rooms, with vistas of the Persian gardens through the great doors, I gave my first suite which was appropriately arranged on Persian themes.

Persian poetry had been very difficult to find, but in some Sufi poems and in the poems of Saadi and Judala 'din Hafiz, I found lovely lines which lent themselves enchantingly to music. I did four of these poetic programs, one East Indian, one Greek, and one North African. The poems were all translated first in music, then beautifully voiced by Craig Ward, the actor, and lastly communicated by the dance. It was all too fragile for a theater, and possibly some of them were, in spots, too "la-de-da," and what the modern school calls "veils and roses," but there was an exquisite delicacy about them that made me long to carry them beyond the experimental stage. But, alas, the nourishment of a school and a career demanded the robust and self-sustaining, and my poems, like other tender things, could not survive such onslaughts.

During all this period it is true that I did give out, on a certain creative level, ideas relative to music and the general culture of the dance. But the fact remains that some strange element within myself never really came alive, except when it was identified with the Orient. While I did produce the *Siamese Ballet*, a Javanese suite and *Kwannon*, the Japanese goddess of mercy, and some new Nautch dances, they were not from those true creative centers in which I took satisfaction. My psychic identification with the Orient lay much deeper.

Sometime around this period I engaged in a delightful eccentricity and rose from an influenza bed to go to San Francisco and appear for the Associated Charities' Benefit. Mrs. Rosalie Stern, the chairman, had sent me an urgent plea, and I was eager to participate, as Alfred Hertz would be wielding the baton.

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Up to this point all went relatively well. Rosalie, who is one of the most beautiful women I have ever known, was quite as beautiful as ever. By temperament she should have been born several generations ago in Paris where she could have had a great salon, but in San Francisco she was one of those rare creatures, a truly *grande dame*, who had a genius for bringing the right people together.

In the evening I met "Papa" Hertz, and sat in a corner with him over a sandwich and a glass of beer, thrashing out the abstract relations of the dance to music, and expanding under his exuberant personality. Alfred is one of the great people of San Francisco, the lovable czar of the symphony concerts for almost a generation. Like all truly great artists, he is interested and sympathetic to the other arts and willing to provide not only an orchestral but a sympathetic support. Papa Hertz's slightly undersized figure, his long black beard and bald dome are familiar to thousands of young San Franciscans.

All of this was very harmonious and acceptable, but the concert was still to come. On that occasion I did the *Black and Gold Sari* which was new and popular. Then I attempted to dance, in a fearful and wonderful rig, the music of *Scheherazade*. Bits of Russian ballet floated through my mind. I remember coyly sitting downstage and in pantomime telling the audience some cock and bull story about the Sultan's court, and then getting up and doing a little "Ruth St. Denis," floating two large pink veils around the stage in the absence of anything better to do. I kept going while the music roared and pled and moaned. I should have been shot. It was the result of one of my weak-minded moments when I gave in to the Associated Charities' plea that they could not afford to orchestrate one of my own selections, and please, would I use the *Scheherazade* music? My good nature defeated my artistic sense at every point, but I think Alfred was too busy looking at the score to know what I was doing, and Mrs. Stern too busy looking at the box-office returns, and Albert Bender satisfied to hover on the outskirts of the audience in order to report great enthusiasm to his Ruthie.

Well, I had a lovely letter from Charles Moore, the co-chairman, to prove that it really took place, and I suppose it was all a mistake in a good cause.

I lingered around San Francisco long enough to make another essay into the drama, this time with the support of Charles Caldwell Dobie, who is best known for his novels and his *San Francisco Tales*. The haunting theme of *The Idyll of the White Lotus* had been reverberating in my mind since I was a child, and when I had met him, some-

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time earlier, I retold it ■ him. He had listened enthusiastically, though slightly puzzled, to my description of its lovely symbology. Then he took it home, and very soon it became the play *Ramati, the Seed of the Lotus*.

Reginald Travers, of the Players Club in San Francisco, helped us to produce it, with Ted in the role opposite me. We opened, following one of our performances of the poetry, music, and dance series. The costumes and the sets were lovely, and the cast worked very hard to support us in this not-altogether-successful venture. From a professional point of view, the production was not important; but in retrospect it has a certain value, as it still encourages me to believe that I can eventually have a play written that will incorporate the spiritual themes and mystical dramas with which I feel most at home.

By now the summer heat was growing unbearable and Pearl and I decided to go up to Yosemite and establish some communication with the waterfalls and the trees. Pearl made advantageous arrangements for me at the Lodge where I was to give a few performances in exchange for a lovely little cabin in the woods. I was supremely happy for those few weeks, feeling a contentment I had not known for many years. The magnificent cliffs, which became radiant and transfigured at sunset like towers of amber flame, the singing pines, and the constant roar or murmur of the falls filled me with a simple, unbounded ecstasy.

It has always been my instinct to relate the dance to nature. I cannot remember a time when the rhythms of nature have not controlled my whole being. I have always felt an intuitive wish to identify my body with the long sway of the sea as it falls against the shore, or the subtle movement of the pine trees when they move in an evening breeze. A wheat field, bending under lashing rain or wind, finds an answering response in my own movements. In the motions of animals, too, I find a curious kinship; and the elements—wind, rain, sea, fire—and the long hotness of the desert have all been translated into my own articulation.

Here in this extraordinary valley I spent an evening I shall never forget. A platform had been built for me in a grove of pines, and behind these pines, facing a cleared space, rose the majestic cliff, Half Dome. The moonlight was flooding the valley, casting black shadows from the cliffs over part of the scene. I danced my *Liebestraum*, that Love Dream, against the pale, gleaming cliff. I danced only to the light from the moon, and the music of the Love Dream was played with such mystery and tenderness that when my dance was over, in-

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stead of disappearing among the pines, I turned toward the moon and the cliff and made a gesture of adoration. I felt as though for a thousand years I had been a part of this luminous hour.

Many nights I sat around the campfire listening, like Desdemona, to the exploits of the "Chief." He was a forest ranger, tall and superbly built, with the heart of a lion and the mind of a boy. To capture a mountain lion or tree a bear was all in the day's work. With only the blazing fire to lighten the darkness and illumine the pointed silhouettes of the pines, I thrilled to his bear hunts and gasped when he lassoed a mountain lion. I waited patiently while he described his angling hours in the stillness of the upper mountains, and I glowed when he told me of other days in Oklahoma when he had followed the exciting career of Sheriff.

When Pearl grew too sleepy to listen my Moor was still feeding my insatiable curiosity. We always outlived our campfire, and on and on through the night the tales were spun. I did not care how highly colored they became. I had never known anything like this before. . . .

In the fall Ted's program was ready, and he started on his solo tour. His company was made up of experienced young protégés. Dorothea Bowen had a very facile technique and youth and a charming personality. Betty May, with her delightful little ways and twinkling feet brought a sweetness and exuberance to the sophisticated program. Martha was her usual brilliant self and provided a vigorous and highly individual note. And Charles Weidman, a student of a year . . . a kind of happy feeling comes over me when I think of Charles. His deftness and his humor always enchanted me. He was superb in the *Crap-Shooter* which Ted had great fun creating for him, and whenever his poignant, wistful *Pierrot* was on the program I never failed to creep out front ■ see it. I cannot help smiling to myself, with a kind of nostalgic affection for the rare and infrequent hours that Charles and I had together. Life was very busy, and he was such a useful as well as clever Denishawner that I seldom had a chance to talk with him, but when I did I always received a sensitive, intelligent response both to my deeper words and to the whimsical nonsense that I laid upon the surface. To this day when Charles and I meet there is set up a friendliness and mutual appreciation that is of pure gold.

On this tour Ted took with him one of his most important new numbers, an entire church service performed in rhythm. Stimulated by my long vision of the dance as the great instrument of worship, he had worked for several years on this conception. His church service

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was an effort to bring the sacred ballet back once more, and he used the conventional order of the service taken from the Protestant ritual. He danced the Prayer and the Doxology; the girls danced the anthem and the hymn; he danced the Psalms, the sermon, and the benediction.

The service was performed in front of some rich Gothic screens. The costumes were all beautiful but austere. There was no suggestion whatever of nudity; the girls' dresses were soft and flowing, patterned after the designs of Fra Angelico. Ted wore white silk trousers and an upper garment with sleeves, and over this a series of beautiful robes to meet the needs of the various parts of the service.

He had danced in several churches in California and the service had been received with dignity and respect. But in Shreveport, Louisiana, he found a different tale. When his program was announced some narrow-minded gentlemen of the city declared in no uncertain terms that they would tar, feather, and lynch him if he attempted anything so blasphemous. Ted, knowing the peculiarities of religious zeal, realized that this was no idle threat and went to the mayor. The mayor was so infected by Ted's enthusiasm and courage that he deputized twelve policemen to guard the theater while the performance went on. The house, I suppose one need not add, was packed, and a number of brave and liberal clergymen came to see what it was all about.

The creative success of this religious dance was of great significance to me in the evolution of the dance in America. It opened up visions of that future toward which I had been groping ever since the days of *Radha*, but for which as yet I had found no temple. When Ted reached New York, the dance drew the attention of Dr. Norman Guthrie, and Ted and the girls performed parts of it at Dr. Guthrie's famous church, Saint-Mark's-in-the-Bouwerie.

When Ted opened at the Apollo Theater in New York he did a charming and unprecedented thing. In his program he dedicated this opening performance to me. I suppose the audience lifted its eyebrows and the critics snorted, but since both books and musical compositions have dedications he saw no reason why the dance should not follow the same gracious course.

This performance at the Apollo was to be a pivotal one, both for Ted and myself. Daniel Mayer, the famous impresario, who was to play such a large part in the development of the school and company, saw Ted's performance and was delighted with it. He had in his office at that time a man who was also to take a great part afterwards in my personal management, Edward Lowrey. It seems that Lowrey had a friend, William Wentzell, in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, who had

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gotten in touch with Lowrey to see if they could have me for a performance at Greensburg. Mayer had already approached me twice before about appearing in London, and I had twice refused. I had nothing to show London. Oh, the terrible implication of those words! What a glimpse they afford of those years of school production when my artistic life was lived vicariously.

But being enthusiastic about Ted, he arranged with him to induce me to play the one engagement in Greensburg in February, so that a possible joint tour with Ted and me under Mayer's management might be arranged. And so, as the novels say, it fell out on this wise, and I made the trip from Los Angeles to discuss the future with Mayer.

Why, after all my rebellions and resentments against the school and joint performances, I leaped to the idea of a long-term contract under Mayer is difficult to analyze. It may well be that I can never accomplish anything by myself, and that I intuitively knew this. Perhaps I must be mated to a running partner, visible or invisible, who believes in me and my vision. Otherwise, in the light of retrospection, I appear to wander about rather futilely, giving out little spurts of ideas, but never really settling down to a purpose. With *Radha*, and *Egypta*, and the Japanese, I had the unselfish, loyal, and persistent stimulus of Mother and Buzz, who loved me and believed in me. I knew that Ted both loved and believed in me, but I became restive when I knew he could not be two people at once. He could not fulfill his own destiny and help me to fulfill mine. As long as his career correlated with mine it was right that we should work together, but in my heart I knew that his road and mine had branched out from each other. When I received Mayer's proposition I immediately thought of his prestige and good taste. Coming at the time it did, his managership and sympathy seemed the only solution to my need of self-expression. Through him, for the first time in years, we would have money on a large scale, and be able to create the ballets that we had longed to do. The whole prospect stimulated my mind and energies, but never at any time did I regard it as the solution to my spiritually creative life.

The single performance took place in February, 1922, and we there signed a contract with Mayer for three years. I can still see him after that performance, coming toward me in his impeccable evening clothes and bowing over my hand in a manner I had not known since the days of Europe and the impresarios of my earlier days. He was a fine, sensitive Jew, with very regular features, keen but genial eyes. Slightly under middle height, he bore himself with courtly dignity. I have



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a picture taken of him in London on some court occasion, and the knee breeches suit him admirably. He and his daughter had a delightful place at Bexhill-on-Sea in England, to which I was warmly invited.

On this first meeting we smiled at each other with complete understanding, and an instantaneous affection sprang up between us that weathered business difficulties and temperamental disagreements.

I returned to California because of school obligations and personal matters, and Ted went back to New York. But Daniel Mayer took charge of our affairs immediately, and vistas of joint success for Ted and me opened up in an unprecedented way. Mayer brought a keen intelligence and an exquisite good taste to our presentations, and this was to carry us on a wave of success which no American ballet had ever known before. Certainly the next three years were to be the apex of our financial and artistic success together.

In April I returned to New York for a short Southern tour, since in May we were to sail for a London engagement. Our child, the school, was left to the tender care of its various stepmothers—Gertrude Moore, Jane Edgerton, Edwina, or Junie—and they carried on valiantly until the distracted parents returned from “furrin” parts. This was, of course, neither the first nor the last time that we treated the child so, and when Ted tells the Denishawn story, in a way that I am incapable of, we will get a better picture of how this child of ours was fed and put to bed by its foster parents. Suffice it for the moment to say that it did carry on.

On May 3 we sailed from Boston: Martha, Charles, Betty May, Dorothea Bowen, Pearl Wheeler, and Betty and Louis Horst.

As I went down to my stateroom, while Ted and the children roamed the decks, their faces already turned toward London, a great heaviness of heart seized me.

To be sure, I had the Japanese, the Egyptian, and the *Peacock*; but these were not products of that austere and great beauty of which my soul had dreamed. These were not properly the fruit of twelve years. So while my affectionate and eager imagination busied itself with the memory of London, which I shall ever adore, my spirit was ashamed, and I suffered in my soul.

I had not the courage to take my stand—to say I would not go to London bringing an inferior art, one which did not begin to measure up to the art I had given it before. I was so constantly aware of the exigencies of the school and the company that I again made

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the sacrifice of my deepest artistic convictions in order to cooperate with Ted and Mayer, and the necessities of the contract.

This was Ted's first trip, and of course the youngsters were already planning all that they were going to do. Gradually I caught the infection of their mood, and left, as in a closed shrine, the unanswered questions of my true art life.

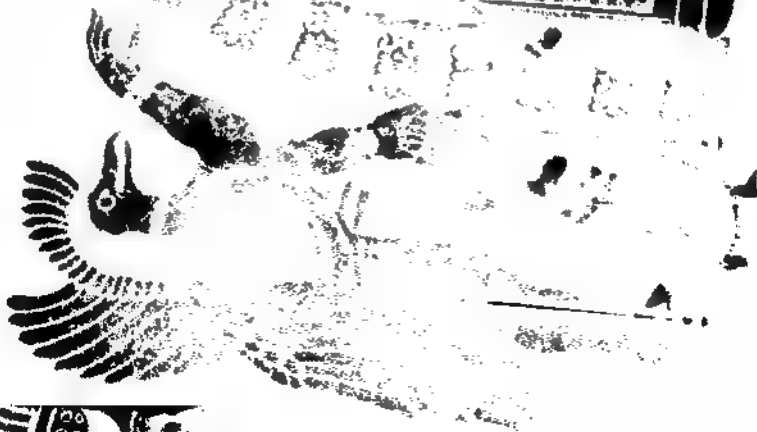
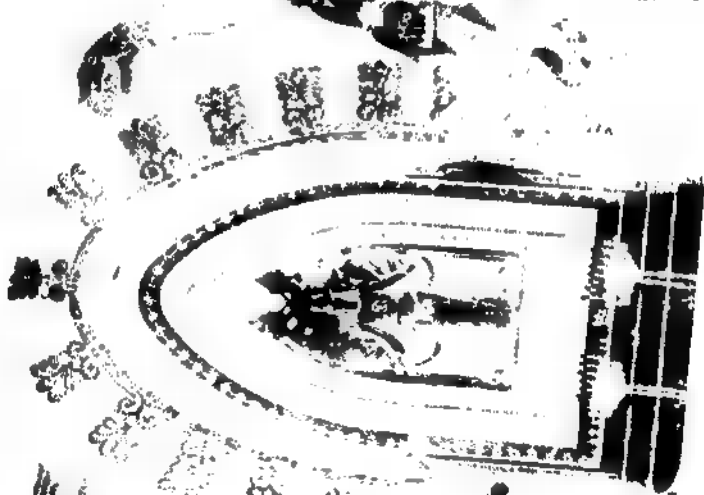
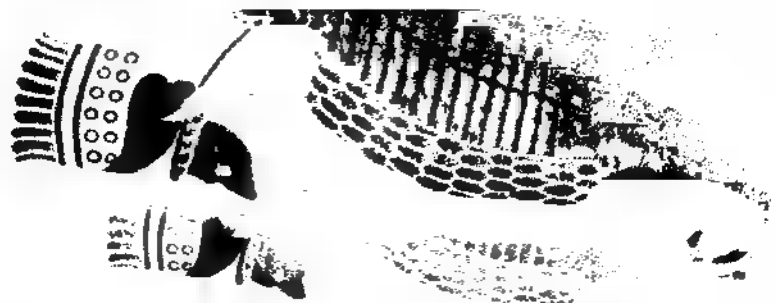


**CHAPTER XII: Making History:** NO MATTER what my personal or professional status may be, whether alive and vital, or low and depressed, the city of London has a peculiar effect upon me every time I visit it. In the first place, since Father was English it is not surprising that I have a sense of coming home. Then, the mellow roar of London always makes a music in my heart, and when I stand in Trafalgar Square, gazing up at Nelson, I feel the pulsations of this ancient city and it is hard for me to find any fault with it at all.

In spite of my unhappiness a heightened tension and delight seized upon me when we rode from the station to the hotel. So much of joy and success and good friends were bound up in the city. Our arrival was heralded with some fanfare, and Adelina Genée sent us a prompt invitation to attend a dinner of the Dancing Circle to be given that evening in our honor. Mme. Genée had now retired from active dancing, but was still as vibrant and bewitching as ever. She had maintained a keen interest in all aspects of the dance in England, which was, it must be confessed, mainly the traditional ballet. But the brilliance of her career and her loyal helpfulness to the British ballet was a constant inspiration to young students and performers.

All the important members of the dancing fraternity in London were there. Mr. P. J. S. Richardson of *The Dancing Times* gave a résumé of what the dancing profession had done to establish a British ballet and how they were trying, under the guidance of the Operatic Association, to spread the correct technique of dancing through the country. Miss Dora Bright, who had composed a great deal of music to which Mme. Genée had danced; Mr. Espinosa and Mme. Lucia Corman, who were celebrated teachers and artists of the ballet; and Mme. Genée's husband, Mr. Isitt, were among the guests. There were various speeches, mostly on technical matters, and it was plain that all the members of the association looked to Mme. Genée for their inspiration and guidance.





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During the evening Ted and I were asked to speak. Ted spoke about the relation of dance to great music. He developed the theory of polyphonic forms of the dance expressed in my synchoric, the dancing of Bach fugues, and all sorts of future possibilities, and was going strong when he felt that he had taken up time enough and sat down amid a faint patter of applause and a long embarrassed silence. I did not rise after Ted's reception with quite the gay spirit I had in mind. I had intended to talk about dancing and religious praise in a tone of well-balanced levity and reverence, but I saw this was not the place nor the time, so I spoke very solemnly about our duty to interpret religion in terms of rhythm. I am afraid I rather dithered off toward the end, because a pretty heavy pall was descending, and I have a remembrance of oozing down into my seat, expecting whatever is beyond silence. I got it.

But the silence was very soon occupied with murmurous discussions of *entrechats* and *tours de l'air*, and I knew, as *Alice* would say, "the time had not yet come to speak" of other things relating to the dance.

There were individuals who spoke to us after the meeting with keen intelligence and enthusiasm, but we realized all over again that London has ever been for the ballet and by the ballet, and that it would be at least another hundred years before any strong element penetrates the fixed succession of *entrechats* and pirouettes—although, when I returned to London, several years later, I was able to shorten the time somewhat, when I saw a recital at Sadler's Wells that any ardent modernist could admire.

Our reception when we opened at the Coliseum was very enthusiastic. The Londoners had remembered me with great loyalty, and they welcomed Ted with a charming and spontaneous enthusiasm. This pleased me immensely and of course delighted him. To be sure, one or two cautious lines crept into the press, questioning the propriety of his scant costumes and wondering if so much human flesh was quite artistic. But the question was always put aside by a pleasure in the program as a whole, and admiration for the individual members of the company.

We did the barbaric, brilliant *Xochitl*, which Ted had created with the artistic assistance of the Mexican artist Francisco Cornejo; and I took over Martha's part in it, which was not suited to me as well as it had been to her. We did my *Sea*, the *Peacock*, the Japanese suite, and the Egyptian. Ted introduced some of his Spanish dances and his striking Japanese *Spear* dance.

Considering that the British critics and public were fairly well set

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in tradition, my continued popularity stands forth as a remarkable evidence of their willingness to accept anything of beauty once their sensitive responses have been awakened. But I was so unhappy emotionally during this period, and I was remembering so keenly my own artistic success in the old days, that I am afraid I was not so gracious and grateful as I should have been.

During the six weeks we were in England we saw many of our old friends and met many new ones. Of course we saw Constance and Max immediately. They were always hoping to come to America again, but Max's painting and Constance's continued work with their little theater group kept them in London. Again, as soon as I saw Constance I began to build new worlds, and all sorts of vague, fourth-dimensional dances began floating through my mind. We could do nothing more than talk about them, but we worried the subject as long as I was in London.

I performed the ancient ritual of my immortal trinity: the St. Faith's Chapel at Westminster, the Elgin Marbles and the Egyptian Room at the British Museum, and the Indian Department of the South Kensington Museum. Ted gave himself over to a purely masculine indulgence, inspired by the parting words of Mrs. John Henry Hammond, who had commanded in no uncertain terms, "Ted, stop wearing those college-boy clothes of yours, and get a decent English suit." Being Ted, he did all or nothing, and presented himself to my dazzled gaze in cutaway, gray waistcoat, silk hat, gloves, and stick—a truly breath-taking picture.

My friend Milly de Fries, from the old days, came upon us again with all her vivacity and stunning personality. She is one of those people who knows everyone, and when she is both a friend and an enthusiast there is nothing she cannot do to further the interests of one's artistic life. She had done many helpful and charming things for me in the old days, and now she arranged a very smart and stimulating evening in Whistler's old studio. She had the London String Quartette, which played a long work of Ravel, and before a group of distinguished artists I improvised to the exquisite playing of the quartette. The Ravel was extremely difficult, and every ounce of musical sensitivity that I possessed went into the count, the dynamics, and the rhythms of this piece, and all my inventiveness went into the movements. It was an exhilarating but somewhat exhausting evening.

It is not hard to imagine any dancer's joy at meeting Havelock Ellis, that patron saint of the dance. It is difficult to speak of the

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inspiring influence that that most civilized of men has had upon Ted's and my life, and upon the dance as a whole. He asked us to come to his little house at Brixton, and there we saw him several times, together and alone.

His room was the true home of a philosopher. It was lined with books, a huge desk was filled with papers which only a mathematician could have sorted out, and when he sat down behind this desk, I thought, "Here is one of the few real philosophers in captivity." I was struck by the splendid carriage of his head, and his quiet but inquiring eyes. His voice was rather high but mellow; his hands rarely gesticulated, but when they did they moved with a curious beauty. He never gave us the impression of being in a hurry, although the dance, we knew, was among his minor interests. With us he made us feel that it was very important. We talked about a hundred things, and discussed his great work, *The Psychology of Sex*, and he spoke of how much more time he would like to devote to this important and engrossing subject.

I shall never forget the richness of his mind, its balance and clarity. Underneath his calm, scholarly personality burned a white flame for all that is finest in our ancient and modern civilizations.

He gave us a note of introduction to Edward Carpenter, whose writings on the Yoga and whose beautiful and subtle analysis of love and desire I had long admired. He was living in the country, but when he received our note he came up to London, in spite of his eighty years, to attend a performance.

He was a frail, gray-haired man, with a gentle, keenly intelligent face. I talked to him alone for a little while, and in a mild way he expressed his resentment against certain publications in America, which, he felt, had not treated him justly. But I, in spite of being an American, soon established a bond of sympathy with him when I told him how much his *Towards Democracy* had helped me in the past and how much his exquisite essays on love had given a focus to my thoughts.

I saw Ethel Leginska again, and she bore Ted and me off to her studio in Chelsea, where she played for us for hours. She was now coming into her own, but her dashing, effervescent temperament was still as stimulating and provocative as ever.

Aurelia Rinehart, that remarkable pioneer at Mills College in California, came to see us several times; and Oscar Selbert, who was military attaché at the American Embassy, entertained us often and charmingly.



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Frank Crowninschild and Condé Nast came around after the performance. Frank was an old friend, an individual quite unrivaled in my acquaintanceship. He moved very much on the same planes as my delightful Count Kessler of the old days in Germany. Frank always had his ear to the ground for any new art or fashion, but had at the same time a truly deep appreciation for the profounder matters of art. He has the singular charm of persuading all with whom he talks of their own terrific importance. When people do that they have a genius of a very high order, for they release and often rebuild an individual's self-esteem and restore his healthy ego. Certainly Frank has always managed to accomplish this for me.

For all too brief a moment my dear Kate Dalliba swung into my orbit again. She had a lovely little flat in London, and took Ted and me off to many enchanting luncheons where we talked over old times and discussed her palazzo in Venice, which we were urged to visit. Her blessed, homely, adorable face, vibrant with the eagerness of life, remains clear in my memory, for this was one of the last times I saw her.

That marvelous character who wove herself, like a good influence, through my career for years, Marie Dressler, took us to her home many times for some real homely food and talked about her plans. This was in one of her low moments, but her indefatigable courage and good humor never allowed one to suspect the depression she was feeling.

Joseph Riter, the bon vivant, gave one of his famous parties, where we met that exuberant and delightful person Lauritz Melchior for the first time. Before our four weeks' engagement was over, Milly de Fries decided that this was an excellent opportunity to press us into a world unity of arts, and accordingly arranged a dinner for the Faculty of Arts at the Connaught Rooms, where C. Lewis Hinds proposed a toast to a union of world artists and Melchior again sang.

Ted and I brought a good deal of enthusiasm to this meeting. We had both had much experience with groups of people who felt keenly that the arts could gain in richness only by their juxtaposition. These groups ranged all the way from some little hostess of uncertain years who wanted to have an art center and express her own little ego—which is natural enough, but not very productive—up to such groups as the Faculty of Arts, where the necessity for a world outlook in the interrelation of the arts was recognized and actively pushed forward.

In the back of her mind, I think, Milly was not only anxious for

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us to contribute our support to the group, but at the same time she wished to open up the wider scope that they could give our art.

Just before we left London for Manchester and Bristol we were rehearsing a dramatization of one of Tagore's poems and, needing a group to represent Hindu women in the scene, asked Mr. Shan-Kar, father of the now famous Uday, to bring a group of English girls whom he had been training. He was a taciturn man with a great ambition for his students. At that time he was teaching his son, who a little later was to make a world tour with Pavlova and then embark on his own brilliant career. I do not remember meeting Uday at that time. This was to be reserved for some years later in New York, when I was asked to make a speech of welcome to him and found him, in contrast to the picture his nervous compatriots had built, not a haughty young Shiva nor a wonder-working fakir, but a charming and gracious young man with a singularly beautiful face and body.

The provinces received us with a good deal more enthusiasm than I had experienced on my ill-fated venture twelve years before. But those zest-filled pioneering days of the past were poignantly brought up when darling Braffie appeared at the Midland Hotel in Manchester. Ted, of course, had never met him, and I took such pride in introducing them. They each appraised the other with a faintly critical but kindly air and, in the simple parlance of the day, each made good, to my intense satisfaction. Braffie was just as charming and full of ideas as ever. He wanted to plan things for us; but since we were under contract to Mayer for the following years in America, nothing could be done. Later, when I returned home, I received some rather pathetic letters from him, and then silence. All my love and gratitude goes into my memory of Braffie.

How true it is that either nature or art can be seen with a clearer vision when the lens of a sympathetic personality is turned upon them. I do not remember exactly when a shy, tall, English boy named Hal Mann first came into our lives, but I have a vivid recollection of seeing his dark eyes watch me as I dashed onto an English train and of learning later from Ted that the boy had been following us from one city to another. A more sensitive, beauty-loving, but well-balanced personality I have seldom known. Through his eyes, several years later, I came to regard the whole English ballet from a new and sympathetic angle. He was a genuine balletomane, but his theater taste was catholic and he accepted all the good things that came his way. His particular star was Pavlova, but Ted and I have warmed ourselves many times at his loyalty and enthusiasm for all the doings

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of Denishawn, and through him I have found a thousand beauties and delights in the traditional ballet that I would have entirely overlooked in the ordinary course of things.

Ted and I went over to Paris for a brief visit before we sailed, and among the hundred things that we crowded into a few days was a performance of the Diaghileff ballet, which included the *Spectre de Rose* with Karsavina. Seeing her for the first time, I was naturally brought to think of Pavlova whom I had watched many times as a dancer and talked to many times as a person, and always admired extravagantly. It is almost banal to say that to me Pavlova transcended the ballet. Karsavina's technical proficiency stood out superbly, but at the same time she seemed classic and cold compared with the human hummingbird I had seen in America. Her style was impeccable. Every arabesque, every *tour jetée* was faultless; but to me, to whom the warmth of temperament meant so much, she lacked personality. Which merely proved again that my understanding of the ballet was not based on an aesthetic concern with the number or quality of *entrechats*.

When we sailed for home we found one of my old friends, Jesse Lasky, on board. He meant the old days of the Hudson to me, when *Radha* first came into being, since he was related to Henry B. Harris and had assisted in the task of putting me on my feet. Now he was a great power in the motion-picture industry, but he was still a gracious person in spite of his business acumen and perspicacity.

On the night of the ship's concert, when all of us notables were to appear, the ship was rolling formidably. Ted undertook to do one of his Spanish dances. The platform was made of four sections, presumably nailed together to make a smooth surface; but as the ship continued to roll, the sections began to widen like the first crevice after an earthquake, and Ted was forced to turn his minute heel tappings into the *pas de chat* of a ballet girl as he hopped from one section to the other, carefully avoiding the abyss which kept deepening as the dance went on. I was more fortunate, since I had elected to do the *Liebestraum*, where the footwork is more adjustable, and I can generally hold the eye of the audience if my feet have to do extraordinary and unrelated things. Walter Damrosch accompanied me gallantly on the piano, in spite of these uncertainties of choreography.

Very shortly after we came back to New York we went up to Mariar-den, at Peterborough, New Hampshire, where we had been asked by the Guy Curriers of Boston to take part in the experiments of their art center. Guy Currier was a successful corporation lawyer, a quiet, but delightful person; Marie Currier had in her earlier days been an

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actress, but as she became wife and mother the outward activities of the stage ceased, although her real interest in the theater had never diminished.

A more ravishing spot to relate art to nature could hardly be found. The hills were all around us; dancing under the trees with the wonderful cloud-filled sky of New Hampshire above us was like restoring the days of Greek innocence when everything was done for joy and nature and art.

Marie Currier believed as I did that art should be healthy, and that it should be learned simply and naturally. She complimented us by calling Mariarden the Eastern Denishawn, and by this season it was drawing artists from all parts of the country. Marie wished to release young artists in this unsophisticated atmosphere, but at the same time train them under the best members of the theater profession. Richard Bennett and Adrienne Morrison were to be there that summer, directing rehearsals. Stuart Walker and Edith Wynne Matheson were to produce plays. Theresa Helburn, Kenneth MacGowan, and Margaret Anglin were all to teach and assist. Tony Sarg was to instruct in the making and manipulating of marionettes, and Grace Ripley was to demonstrate the dyeing of fabrics and costume making; while Ted and I had classes for children and older girls in the dance.

We all lived in little cabins in the woods, and wherever we went our only roadway was a trail and our only glimpses of the world outside were over the hills and into more green valleys. And all that was most healthy and free filled our days.

Since we all believed in Marie Currier's vision we tried to bring it into expression. How far we succeeded and how far we failed still remains a question, but in the unhealthy and circumscribed atmosphere of the commercial theater of that period Mariarden provided a glimpse of the joys that were possible along the lines of bodily expression. The seeds that were planted in that colony will fructify—or perhaps they have already in other minds and in other places.

We had our troubles, of course, dramatically precipitated by the cook. A friend of a friend of this lady had heard with awful delight that one of the dancers—and a man at that—was planning to dance with nothing on. That the offender was Ted rehearsing his *Adonis Plastique* did not alter matters at all. There had been loud discussions and whispered conferences in the servants' quarters, and the excitement had come to Marie's ears. It certainly sounded as though Ted were going one point beyond the limit. Now Ted, a day or two before the rumpus broke, had contracted a dazzling case of poison ivy, brought

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on by an injudicious festoon which had been presented to him for a Greek dance, and he was in no state of mind to be told that his beautiful and very chaste plastique had better be dropped.

We were both furious, I only slightly less so than Ted, who sat up in bed with his swollen eyes and shouted, "Who's the artistic censor of this colony? The art patrons who come here or the cook in the kitchen? Is this an adult colony or is it run for children? I won't stand for it!" I think he was for leaping out of bed and telling Marie what he thought of such a state of affairs, but I poured a little oil on troubled waters and we decided to say to the Curriers, "Let us issue an invitation, signed by us, and by you, to a specially selected list. Let us draw it from staid and true Bostonians here at Dublin and Peterborough, and we will ask them to be our guests for a special evening in the theater. We will say nothing of what they are going to see."

The Curriers agreed, and on the evening arranged our friends arrived in droves. The Curriers were naturally a bit edgy, since they could not afford to allow anything at Mariarden that would make front-page news. But we had no intention of doing anything of the kind.

It was a glorious night. The moon behaved beautifully, and as the curtains were drawn back I slipped onto the apron of the stage and began a short talk on art in general and mental attitudes in particular. Never once, as Guy Currier observed with some amusement later, did I mention nudity. As I retired, a little group of Egyptian dancers, clad only in their brown body paint and beaded belts about their middles, began a two-dimensional hieroglyphic dance in imitation of the old Egyptian frieze. This was received with no evident perturbation. When the curtains separated for the next dance all that could be seen were the trees of the wood, and the dark sky overhead, and the glorious figure of Adonis, in marble white and conventional fig-leaf crouching on his pedestal. There was a gasp of unaffected admiration as the strains of Godard's beautiful *Adagio Pathétique* soared into the evening air and Ted began to move in the first of his series of thirty-two postures taken from the classic sculpture of Adonis. When the curtains finally closed, the audience cheered—and a relieved smile spread over the faces of the Curriers.

Ted's faith was vindicated to the extent that he included the Adonis on his regular program for the next three years, and the cook had nothing further to say.

The whole question of nudity in the dance bristles with difficulties

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and yet contains overtones and implications relating to the human personality that need more space and time to develop than I am able to command here. From my artistic point of view nudity is the most expensive form of ballet. For instance, I want very much to produce one of Kahlil Gibran's lovely drawings. His figures, in sepia, are nude against a semiabstract, seminatural background. His groupings are exquisite and full of meaning, but in order to present a small group of young people in a scene such as his drawings indicate one would need the most expensive lighting, the most subtle background, and above all, the most flawless dancers, since not all dancers have beautiful figures nor do all beautiful figures dance. Great patience would be needed to work out a new tempo of movement, chaste and yet full of vitality and meaning. I believe this can be done, and done without a shadow of offense, but I have never had the conditions necessary for this kind of production, and anything less than a perfect approach to the dance of nudity would be disastrous.

During our time at Peterborough we met that extraordinary family, the Braggiottis. There were innumerable members of this unique tribe, all talented, intelligent, and beautiful as gods. There were four boys and four girls, and they had arrived exuberantly in Boston some five years before from Italy. Many of their relatives lived in Boston, and they were accepted, with their brilliance, unconventionality, and glamour, by the most conservative of Boston society. Berthe and Francesca, the two girls whom we knew best, came to Mariarden to study dancing—or rather to superimpose Denishawn upon their own volatility, for Francesca had danced when she was fourteen at the Monte Carlo Grand Opera and still continued in her lyric and untechnical manner to bring down the house. Berthe was a gracious soul with an indescribable sweetness and a great capacity for warm human sympathy as well as an intuitive appreciation for all beauty in art. Papa Braggiotti, with his rolling voice and endearing qualities, was a well-known voice teacher, and he used to come to Mariarden to see the girls. He was a delight to listen to. He was more likely than not, while rehearsing an aria, to stop everything in order to repeat one of his inimitable anecdotes and the poor soprano was left with her mouth open. His memories were full of the fabulous days in their villa at Florence. All the genius of the Muses was gathered in him, but no common sense. The girls adored their papa but had to run him, since he had no sense of time or money and did everything with a grand manner.

When the summer was over Berthe and Cesca decided to start a

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branch of Denishawn in Brookline, and with their customary vitality they made a success of it and brought all the smart little children of Boston flocking.

We spent a good deal of time at the Joseph Lindon Smiths'. Joseph was an artist who had gone for many winters to Egypt and painted Egyptian murals and bas-reliefs with such incredible faithfulness and exquisite taste that they were frequently exhibited in museums. But much more important than that, he was an unpredictable and fascinating personality, a really demoralizing friend because one was always able to do the ridiculous things that the heart craves when the doors inclosed us in his hospitable house.

One night when a few friends came in I itched to show off my Japanese Storyteller, the one parlor trick with which I can be easily urged to oblige. It consists of a lot of hocus-pocus to begin with, lights out, candles brought, everyone seated in a row like a Japanese audience. Then from the depths of nowhere comes a blood-curdling voice, the opening speech of a storyteller who is about to electrify his small audience with tales of a heroic past. Presently a terrifying figure enters, clad, in this case, in some kimonos of Joseph, and a pair of borrowed white socks, a white towel tied around the forehead, a dab of white powder on the face, and an improvised paper fan, flourished with a magnificent gesture. The audience, of course, did not know whether to applaud or laugh and ended by doing both. I knelt down between the two candles which cast nice terrifying shadows behind me, and proceeded to give my best imitation of Japanese, taking on the various characteristics of the persons in my story. Halfway through, as I began ■ gurgle and snort and draw my breath in and emit hideous grunts, my audience began to laugh, and after I had committed hara-kiri I could only lie sprawled on the rug, limp and aching with laughter myself.

There were many reasons why these Peterborough seasons are joyful memories, and friends were not the least reason. I saw many of my Boston friends again. Eben Comins, the artist, made a striking study of me in my green *Nautch* costume, which was on exhibition for some time. And this chronicle would not be complete without my friend Joe Robinson.

Joe has always been a grand pal, and in our Peterborough days he used to go around with one of those lightning German cameras and, sneaking up on us, take candid and uncandid photographs, sometimes when we were not looking, but more often when we were, with our mouths open and a stricken look in our eyes. Later Joe took unto

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himself a lovely wife, and we three have spent many delightful times together on country rides or at Romany Marie's in Greenwich Village.

Ted and I had an opportunity to go down to Gloucester to meet the one member of the John Hays Hammond family we did not know, John Hays, Jr. Mrs. Hammond and Natalie had been faithful patrons and friends in Washington. They always came backstage to speak a word of encouragement, or plan some delightful social event. And so when we had a chance to go to Gloucester to hear the electric organ which young Mr. Hammond had invented, we went eagerly. We spent a fascinating afternoon, listening to the organ and seeing the models of other inventions in which young Hammond was deeply interested. I danced ■ the organ, and felt its great potentialities for the dance and especially for the religious aspects of the dance, which had always concerned me so deeply and were growing more and more important in my thought.

Of course the MacDowell colony across the valley from us in Peterborough was a persistent attraction to me. Whenever I want especially to be proud of what women in America are doing for the arts, and single-handed at that, I think of Mrs. MacDowell, the widow of the composer, holding forth all these years with the courage and vision that I believe accompanies only the pioneering stages of a national culture. A more witty and delightful person than she would be hard to find. And every season an output of pure creativeness comes from this place of heavenly solitude up there in the New Hampshire hills.

Sol Cohen was a guest at the colony, hard at work on an opera, while I was at Mariarden. One evening when I came over to see him we met in the reception hall and wandered off in the general direction of Mrs. MacDowell's residence, searching for a studio where, at this late hour, he could play me some of the movements from his opera. He played for some time, and then stopped while we talked and eventually wandered out onto the lawn. From the lawn we gravitated toward the MacDowell kitchen, as we had both grown thirsty. We went through the screen door softly, and were making for the tap when an inner door opened and there stood the chatelaine of this distinguished colony in her nightie. She, too, was in search of a glass of water. But she sat down on the steps, and of course we all began to talk, and the Lord only knows what time we left and she was allowed to go to sleep. Most of it was her own fault. She was far too attractive company.

We danced with the Boston Philharmonic in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and then we came back to New York for another of our long tours. Our child was still being cared for by its foster parents—or



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rather our children, for we had multiplied. There were branches of Denishawn in Boston and Rochester, Wichita and San Francisco, Dallas and Kansas City and Minneapolis. Most of these schools were the outgrowth of our teaching classes. Some girl had come from Rochester or Kansas City, caught a glimpse of what Denishawn was expressing, and returned to her home town to represent the spirit and technique as faithfully as possible. How glad we were for them is difficult to say. Mirrored back to us from all sections of the country was the story we Denishawners were trying to tell of beauty and art relating itself to life.

The main school in Los Angeles was in the care, by now, of little Hazel Krans, an individual of whom we were inordinately proud. Hazel, when she first came to us, had been very much like Doris, a prim, academic little person, full of schoolteaching, shy as to manner, with a slender, rather undeveloped little body, a shock of short brown hair, and a lovely, appealing smile. She was one of those who in dark, confused times always brought a moment's radiance. A hundred times Hazel has come up to me at a period when I needed help desperately and said in her shy, breathy little way, "You know I love you," and this always seemed to settle everything for the moment and I would pick up and go on. Through her love for children Hazel developed not only into the best children's teacher that Denishawn ever had, but I solemnly believe the best there is in America today. She is a child with children, and yet a keen adult consciousness functions behind her adorable ways and her endless play with her classes. Her technique is always severe and exact but painless, and her children's ballets should, in my estimation, be models of imagination and charm for all children's teachers.

In Rochester Florence Colbrook Powers maintained her classes on a high level of enthusiasm and was always an eager disciple of what was new and fine in the dance. All the other teachers, scattered in little groups through the West or the Middle West, warmed our spirits many times by their faithfulness to the lessons of Denishawn and their own initiative in adapting them to the communities in which they lived.

In the spring Ted and an old-time friend, Arthur Buruel, set sail for Spain. Ted had always been supreme in his Spanish dancing, but he was intensely eager to see Spain for himself, to study, and to bring back costumes. He sent me daily letters, which he called "The Tales of Teddy, the Terpsichorean Traveler," and attempted to appease my wanderlust with minute and faithful descriptions of everything

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he saw and felt. In Barcelona he studied with Perfecto Perez, in Sevilla with the famous Otero, at that time retired into a barbershop. Everywhere, in his search for the best of Spanish dancing, he plunged into the grimmest sections of the city, into disreputable cabarets and third-rate theaters, for they seemed to be the sole nurturing places of what he was seeking.

He crossed over to North Africa, Tunisia, and Algiers, and any-time, day or night, he would trek into unknown wastes of native cafés and down-at-the-heel brothels in his search for the dances that he wished to match our steps to. Once, at four in the morning, his guide awakened him with the news that an Arab dance was about to be performed at a native cabaret across the city; and off they started, Ted dressing as they went.

In pursuit of Ouled-Nails he took his first airplane ride and flew over the Sahara from Biskra to a little oasis town called Touggourt. He sent me a characteristic little note, almost illegible from the jerking of the plane.

Roofie. I have told you I love you under all other circumstances, and I must add this one to it. We are very high and I see villages and oases below me. We are returning to Biskra.

A day or two later he wrote:

At ten o'clock last night the guide appeared and took us to his shop. He had produced his dervish. The performance was the real thing without any doubt. As dancing it held only a germ of a very stunning idea in one or two places—but as a real thrill it rivalled the bull fight. There were five of them in the cast. A priest, a tomtom player and a flute player, an attendant to the dervish, and the dervish himself. He was a mangy looking individual with one blind eye. The music started and he began to shake all over. He danced back and forth calling to the tomtom and the flute. Then the attendant gave him two pins like huge hatpins. These he proceeded to push entirely through both cheeks and when he removed them there was not a drop of blood. Then he had his hands bound tightly behind his back, placed his burnoose all over him, danced some more, and emerged with hands untied. All this time never stopping his infernal shaking. During this time in a far corner a brazier was being fanned by the attendant, who now withdrew from it a metal instrument, white hot. This the dervish licked with his tongue until it was black and cold. No burn appeared on his tongue, although hissing steam arose each time. This was all so close to me that I was uncomfortable lest his hysteria land him in my lap. The frenzy reached its height during this, and for the first time I saw the embryo of dance form in the movements. The picture was most

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impressive—the dark room lighted by one flame, and those five black natives playing like mad on flute and tomtom, the silent, mystic-eyed priest and this frenzied fiend.

He brought back trunks of costumes and accessories. He had a sharp and discerning eye for quality and value, though he indulged himself only once or twice. Turning toward Tunis:

I boarded a train and at first had the compartment to myself. But one or two short stops out of Constantine the door opened and Arab porters started piling in luggage. Then a woman's voice said, "Those boys don't know how to arrange luggage at all!" Ah, Americans, says I. Then I looked up and stared, and exclaimed, "Burton Holmes and wife!" And it was. Can you imagine such a coincidence! They are sailing on the same boat I am for Naples.

From North Africa he went to Sicily and Italy, and in Naples:

Arthur met me at the wharf and took me to the hotel, and the Holmes' having nothing better to do, trailed along. It did me a great deal of good to see the world's most famous travellers make mistakes about their tickets, get gypped by people, and have no set ideas about hotels. It relieved my conscience about myself.

In Florence he stayed at the Villa Braggiotti, high above the city, where he met many of the Florentine poets and musicians.

When he returned we broke into a rash of Spanish and Algerian dances. With the student's eye he had been able to analyze and reproduce the dances he had seen. For the coming season we planned an ambitious program—far too ambitious for two relatively sane dancers to attempt. Our *Quadro Flamenco*, the first of its kind in the United States, was the Spanish contribution. It was dashing and brilliant and full of color, and although Ted was never satisfied with it completely it was a popular and stunning piece. Algiers came in with *The Vision of the Assouia*, a story of a dervish and his dream. In addition to these was Ted's *Hopi Indian*, one of the finest things he ever did. American in theme and choreography, with music arranged from Indian airs by Charles Wakefield Cadman, the costumes among the most beautiful I have ever seen in ballet, it was really his great achievement at this period. The masks of the Catcinas were stupendous, and the shadows that they cast on the Hopi dwelling in the dance of the gods was a thrilling business. Both this and *Xochitl*, Ted's earlier ballet, are of a dateless kind, and should not be relegated to the past under any circumstances.

My most important achievement was *Ishtar of the Seven Gates*. It stood out like a mountain peak in the otherwise flat desert of my per-

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formances; and I shall never be thankful enough to Ted for his support in producing it. He got me books, particularly Professor Jastrow's translation, in his *Babylonian and Assyrian Civilizations*, of an ancient Babylonian poem; he helped Louis find a beautiful composition of Charles Griffes, that talented young composer who died all too soon. And in other ways he protected me from too much work on the rest of the program, and gave me the moral support and encouragement which I always need when attacking a major problem like this.

*Ishtar* was a spiritual sister of *Egypta* and *Radha*. For a long time I had been grieving that I had been unable to produce these semimystical, semireligious dances that I felt were my special talent. For years now I had been upon a rack which pulled from the left on my human side, and on the right with all that I might become. What the public saw in *Ishtar* was the momentary manifestation of that rare state when for a few precious hours my spiritual and physical equilibrium was attained. It is to my eternal shame that I was continually forced or lured from that point.

To me there is only one real drama: the drama of man's struggle to emerge from the limitation imposed by his own concept of time and space. The symbol of *Egypta* was the balanced faculties of the bisexual or complete being, expressed in the negative and positive of day and night, in the manifold life and culture of man and woman, and in the complete cycle of life and death. *Radha* was the symbol of realization, that only by a complete denial of the attachments of sense does one experience the golden lotus of illumination. *Ishtar* was the desire principle of creation, that living power that manifested itself first in human love and passion, and then in the ramifications of those energies of love which are expressed in the combativeness of war, in the imagery of the arts, and in the illumination of religion.

In the future I hoped to produce a fourth conception: Mary, the Madonna. Mary was to symbolize the ultimate creating principle which embraces compassion as well as creation. Mary is the conceiving principle which contains no element of error, discord, or the limitations of time and space. This treatment of our Christian goddess was to be done in a modern and not a traditional manner, having many elements which had not been developed in the Catholic symbology.

My *Mary* is still to be done in her totality. She has appeared today only in fragments.

My final use to art is impersonal, for when I dance I am really an abstraction, a creature set apart from time and space, unrelated to human things in the ordinary sense. I feel a certain limitless state of

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being, a curious unending movement not only of my dance, but of my very being. I could go on and on without cessation, subject only to the necessary limits of the body.

This of course is more or less true of all dancing—that is its great symbolism and value to life. But I believe that with me another quality ■ added to the dancer. I feel when I dance before great audiences that I am delivering a wordless message of immortality; that life is harmonious without end; that my body is indeed the willing servant of the mind, and its geometric forms are the very patterns and designs of divinity—because without divinity I would not be living, or breathing, or dancing.

In *Ishtar* I became the Babylonian goddess of love and fertility, the counterpart of Venus, Isis, or Astarte. The ballet told the story of Ishtar's descent into the underworld, through seven gates, in search of her lover, Tammuz, who personified the manifestations of spring and summer, which reappeared when he ascended to the earth with Ishtar after the spell of death and winter had been broken. But the Queen of Death never gave him up easily. At each of the gates Ishtar was stopped and stripped of her jewels at the command of the Queen of the Lower World. When she finally reached the court of the underworld she found the golden figure of Tammuz asleep under a black veil, surrounded by the exquisite bodies of his girl attendants.

Ishtar ordered the water of life to be brought to her; and as she sprinkled this over the body of Tammuz he and his attendants slowly came to life, and the black veil was lifted. As he moved from the couch Ishtar beckoned him to come with her to the upper regions, and they slowly mounted to earth, bringing the spring with them. As summer drew to an end she and Tammuz performed their dance of the *Love-Death*; and he descended to the Queen of the Lower World again. Ishtar recovered her jewels, and ascended the Seven Gates to her shrine. The lights of the temple were lowered, and the ritual was over.

As things are today, and as they have been during my long career, two definite things are against the proper manifestation of these symbolic dances: they definitely need the quiet and protection of being produced in one place, and they need the cooperation of dedicated rather than paid helpers. Whenever I managed to produce them, though the public responded to their curious and compelling power, they always proved extravagant and impossible to continue in their theatrical form. Aesthetically and financially, it would seem that I could make out quite a martyr's case for myself. As a matter of fact, I rather enjoy doing it. But let me go a little deeper. The truth is that I have never been willing to apply the same quality of intelligence and intuition to

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my money affairs that I have to my art life. In this I am exhibiting the same evasions and stupidities as every other artist. ■ I go still deeper the inescapable fact is revealed that I dance on rhythms that the world either has not caught up with or has passed by on its way to this modern age. I have given my art to a world intent on other things; I have not harmonized with the forms and rhythms of my day, and so have paid the terrible price of frustration, since there was never a time when I could do what I wanted to do adequately.

*Ishtar* had its first performance in Atlantic City. As usual, my enthusiasm got the better of my practical sense, and *Ishtar* arrived at the theater with eight hundred tons of scenery. When this was brought to my stricken attention I humbly agreed to have the gates cut down to one, so that *Ishtar* could at least be moved out of Atlantic City.

*Ishtar* and the other ballets on the program were prepared at the studio we had taken at Carnegie Hall or in the house we rented on West Twenty-eighth Street and turned into a Denishawn. Since Hazel and Jane Edgerton were doing marvels in Los Angeles we had transferred most of our own school activities for the first time to New York. My love for California had been very real all these years. The school and our productions; the children coming from the different states; the meetings with musicians, painters, writers—all were happy memories. But I had always longed for the high stimulus that New York gives every artist who aspires to attain the highest of his art. One cynic said that California accepts enthusiastically the second best, and there was a world of truth in it. Ted did not feel this so keenly as I did for many plain reasons. He had not, until recently, known the stimulus of Europe or New York, and what was often to him a great success and a sense of victory was to me a pretty tepid reward for the drudgery and the small creative triumph that came as a result.

The Twenty-eighth Street house was unsatisfactory, and none of us cared for it, but many fine teachers came to us there and we were able to establish a curriculum that seemed more nearly what we desired. We held more steadfastly than ever to our belief that Denishawn should be more than an institution, that it should be a philosophy. We wanted to give the students, not a rigid technique, but rather such a power to dance that whatever their professional life demanded they would be able to respond with perfect assurance. To those who were planning no career, and even to those who were, we wanted to give an intimate understanding of all the other arts, so that this wide culture would be as familiar to them as the steps they learned. If established on this basis,

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we proved that the dance could never be a drudgery, but rather a more expanded freedom of expression.

We wanted the school to be a stream for ideas, and I think we succeeded, although Ted and I were always fully aware that we had borne a young prince and were raising him like a stepchild.

Our concept of the dance at this time and for the future was indicated slightly through the classes we arranged. There were classes in music visualization, and in the dance techniques of India, Japan, Egypt, North Africa, Java. We studied plastiques and dramatic gesture, based on Delsarte. Ted gave lectures on the history of the dance and on the philosophy of the dance and costumes; I talked on the Orient and on the synchronic and about the handling of draperies; other teachers discussed music, color, make-up, and anything else that seemed even remotely related to the dance.

Photography I especially emphasized, because I believe that good pictures of the dancer are a necessity of her career.

We had not included the dance on the point, or the traditional ballet, not because of any barriers between what we considered the truly American development and the old traditional forms, but because we felt that we could not assume the organization of a complete ballet department. Yet we always taught the fundamentals of bar work which would allow a girl to become a ballerina with very little adjustment. We believed that, as the American dance theater developed, all forms, old and modern, would have to be represented.

Katharine Edson came to lecture on the traditional ballet and eventually became director of the New York Denishawn. She was a real personality in the world of the dance. She had made a scientific study of the use of the human body as an instrument of art expression. Having been one of the foremost pupils of Mrs. Richard Hovey, she made a genuine contribution to the techniques of the dance by an intelligent fusion of the work of Delsarte with that of the ballet. The last work of Katharine I saw, after she left Denishawn, was a fascinating ensemble for Gilmor Brown's wonderful production of Eugene O'Neill's *Lazarus Laughed*, at the Pasadena Playhouse. Her rhythmic chorus carried out and complemented the overtones of the play.

Elsa Findlay gave a lecture and classes on the Dalcroze school. She brought a clear understanding of the theory of music, and in the minds of many students she laid a deep foundation for musical appreciation. Since these Denishawn days she has had her own studio and has exerted considerable influence over the whole dance in New York.

Paul Mathis, who had long been a Denishawn student, began teach-

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ing for us. Paul's leaning was and is toward the traditional ballet, and in this he is as fine a teacher as I know. To see a class, under Paul's teaching, slowly progressing from the first early efforts at the bar to his beautiful ballet combinations is a pure joy.

As our ideas became more and more clean-cut they naturally found their way to paper, and the inevitable happened. Ted gave birth to a magazine. While I am an inveterate scribbler, writing at all hours of the day and night, I would never have had the concentrative ability to think in terms of a magazine, but I was enthusiastic about the idea, and we had visions of the influence it would have in raising the ideals of thousands of young dancers. For thousands, we knew, needed to be shaken free of their personal predilections and made to see the dance from its practical as well as its artistic side.

Ted's concept was to make the magazine something besides a mere house organ. It was to include articles and photographs, not only of Denishawners, but of everyone who had brought something to the dance. It was to include descriptions of all the arts and cultures, and was to be eventually opened to young writers in America and Europe and Asia.

Ted and I were the editors; June Rhodes and Katharine Edson, associate editors; and Morris Colman, assistant editor. Louis had a column, "The Musician Comments"; Ted began a series of articles on the history of the dance; I wrote on musical visualization, and Katharine on the art of gesture. Milly de Fries contributed a European letter, and we contracted for articles from Ludwig Lewisohn and Albert Wiggam. We used the Denishawn symbol that Rose O'Neill had drawn for us, and the skillful and beautiful frame that Bernice Oehler designed for the cover. I must stop for a minute to speak about both Rose O'Neill and Bernice.

Of course for years Rose has been an American institution through her "kewpies," although I imagine Rose feels about the kewpies as poor Gelett Burgess did about the purple cow. She is a great artist, both in herself and in her work. I cannot describe Rose's personality, for she is one of those vital people who combine a tremendous spiritual force with a charm of exterior which on a first encounter conceals rather than reveals the depths of her nature. Seeing our well-intentioned, but rather inadequate Denishawn symbol which we had taken from an Eastern design of two halves making a perfect whole, Rose undertook to put this symbol into some artistic unity, and this we proudly used for years. She also did two lovely full-length figures of Ted and me, which have never received their proper appreciation.

As for Bernice, she brought her extraordinary genius for capturing the movements of a dance on paper through the intermediacy of a



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magazine called *Drama*. On a cover was her drawing of our Egyptian duet, done with such skill and feeling that we felt we must get in touch with the artist immediately. We wrote to her and had an answer from her home in Wisconsin, and her reply was so gay and witty that we felt we had found a real person. And so we had. From that day to this Bernice Oehler and all the Denishawners have been great comrades and productive partners. Her quick, sensitive pencil can catch a dancer's movements with a fidelity I have never seen before. *The Denishawn Magazine* was filled with her incredible little drawings.

Of course we were mostly on tour, but when we were in New York we saw many of our friends. On Christmas Eve I followed my annual custom and went up to Hyperion House, the little place of Henry Steigner in upper Manhattan. Henry is a unique person, a mystic, an art patron, and a teacher. He has always been interested in my religio-dance life, and I in turn enjoyed enormously the crowd that always assembled at this seasonal party, when his little house was rededicated to the encouragement and help of young artists. I always make a little speech and always get much too much praise for it.

On this special Christmas Eve the Sidés came up to me, expressing their appreciation for what I had said, and asking me to come to their home on New Year's Eve. Alfredo and Consuelo Sidés were rare and charming people who stood on the threshold between the inner world of spiritual values and the outer world of the arts. Alfredo owned a picture gallery, and their apartment, with its high ceilings and superb decorations, was filled with many treasures. Their handful of very select guests made a warm and cordial atmosphere, which caused us all to expand in a way no New Year's Eve drinks could have done. Princess Matchabelli, always looking like a lovely nun strayed from her convent, and Ganna Walska, the singer, a regal duchess in black velvet and diamonds, gave a special note to what was otherwise a rather philosophical evening. At Alfredo's request I talked about peace and what it meant to stand, paradoxically, by our guns, and also that the new year was really a matter of daily rebirth within our own souls.

Our friends the Wards, Jack and Elizabeth, lived down in Gramercy Park. They were famous for their parties. Jack was a tall, attractive, radiant person, beloved by a great many people, and Elizabeth, who looked like a charming Dresden-china shepherdess, had great social skill and a talent for being kind to artists. Their special guests one evening were Dr. Ananda Coomaraswami, now the curator of the East Indian section of the Boston Museum, and Ratan Devi, who was then his wife. Ratan Devi sang East Indian songs enchantingly. On this evening she

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sat quietly down with her huge tamboura on her knee, and presently a most extraordinary and lovely sound came from this immobile figure caressing the strings of her Indian lute. I have never heard Indian songs done the way Ratan Devi does them, and we predicted for her the great success in the concert field which she more than fulfilled.

The Billy Wrights also had many musical evenings. Billy, besides being a businessman, was a consummate photographer, and he has taken some of my most charming studies. They had a lovely duplex apartment on Madison Avenue, and one evening, when Chaliapin and John McCormick were among the guests, Cobina, dressed in her long medieval gown, stood against a tapestry at the end of the room and sang some Debussy songs with exquisite artistry. Later, in the dining room, Chaliapin and I got off in a corner and had a delightful conversation about everything from mushrooms to cathedrals. He was a giant of a boy with the brain of a scientist and the heart of a child.

Our tour each year with Mayer carried us to the Pacific Coast and back. In this traveling life of mine I was never without a small library, and never without my journals. These were my food and my balance wheel. I could not have endured the monotony of these endless one-night stands without these inseparable companions.

Year after year the same books traveled with me: *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, by Dr. Ananda Coomaraswami, a splendid introduction to Buddhism; *The Bhagavadgita*, that marvelous dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna on the field of battle, which is the heart-beat of Hinduism; *Little Essays of Love and Virtue*, by Havelock Ellis, tender persuasive words, pleading for more love and better, not less; *Christ and the Indian Road*, by Stanley Jones, that first-century Christian, now living in India; *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher*, by Count Keyserling, to my way of thinking the most fascinating travel book I have ever read; *The Gate Beautiful*, by Stimpson, a rare and valuable book for those mystically inclined young artists for whom God geometrizes. The books on mysticism by the English writer, Evelyn Underhill, were enticing records of the mystical experiences and principles as practiced over the centuries by Christian saints and *The Gleam*, by Sir Francis Younghusband, and *God Is My Adventure*, by Rom Landeau, two valuable and exciting books on semimodern philosophers and saints, stimulated and vitalized me.

The writing of my journals served a double purpose: one was the release of my emotional feelings, and the record of the currents set in motion by books and objective happenings; the other was a subtle and

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very powerful liberation that came when, in great distress and fear, I wrote out my prayers and affirmations. In the writing of them my thought steadied. I could correct what was incorrect, and receive back the assurance from what was true.

These one-night stands were the punishment for our necessary financial sins.

Our only real competitors in the dance field during those tours were the Isadorables, that enchanting group of Isadora's six lovely girls with George Copeland at the piano, an unforgettable combination; and that very significant group called the Marian Morgan Dancers. Marian Morgan was an artist and a teacher of real distinction, and produced—mostly in vaudeville at this time—charming and beautiful ballets. Her Greyhounds, as her tall, slender, splendidly trained young girls were called, were an integral part of the growing dance consciousness of America.

A pair of dance creators and interpreters who, although not competitors, held the artistic standard high were Pavley and Oukrainsky. They were heads of the Chicago Opera Ballet, but they also toured independently. I never knew Pavley except through his work, which was brilliant and technical. But I have had many delightful conversations with Mr. Oukrainsky. He was a bigger person than a mere choreographer. His sympathies were deep; and I think he was capable of much graver work than his circumstances accorded him. I saw him once do a plastique of the carrying of the Cross that was one of the most touching and dramatic things I have ever seen.

We were carried in and out of towns and in and out of friends' homes at a rate that left us little time for more than surface impressions. In Denver we saw Judge Ben Lindsey again, that redoubtable fighter for children's rights and the right to a new social order. He was fighting the Ku Klux Klan at that time. It had already secured control of the city administration and was out after him and the entire state judiciary. It especially wanted that stronghold for women and children, the Juvenile Court, over which he presided with such wisdom. I had great admiration for him and his farsightedness and courage, and I watched his continual struggles over many years with a longing to do more than express my appreciation.

In Omaha we always stopped long enough to see the Mahoneys, and, a close running second, the Borglums. Eva and May Mahoney and their blessed mother were a center for all the arts in that part of the Middle West. They had what almost amounted to an American salon, where we all drank from the poets and the prophets and the spirit of

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inspiration instead of the usual bottle. The friendship of these two delightful girls has existed up to this day. As for Lucy Borglum, who had married the brother of Gutzon Borglum, the sculptor, she too, provided food for the soul after a dreary session of one-night stands. Not only did she please the ear with musical evenings, but she also took care of our other parts with her delectable suppers, and over the rarebit and fruit and French wine the evening would really begin.

In Spokane we met Vachel Lindsay once more. We were both devoted to him, and listened with great pleasure while he chanted his poems. He had just written an Egyptian poem, concerning Cleopatra, which he thought might appeal to me. It was a fascinating affair, a dialogue between the shade of Cleopatra and one of her lovers. I had a letter from him later, which expressed some of the mutual affection that lay within us.

My dear friend, you have meant so much to me. We know our own when we meet our own, ever so briefly. May the bright stars be with Mr. Shawn and you forever. May the Love of Beauty and the Love of God come shining to this land, because you have lived and danced. May Glory and Wisdom follow you. I have thought of you as deeply as I can meditate on anything, and in my deepest thoughts I can see only glory and new life for this land in what you have done, and shining years ahead for you. Your hearts are valiant and your minds are wise, and I know you love the dear God of Heaven and the stars. Many people are wise and weary, but you are wise and valiant.

Precious and revivifying words.

In our nonspectacular pioneering for the dance, having played what is vulgarly known as the "big spots," the cities, we were partly forced and partly desirous of bringing the dance to the small towns, believing beauty-loving people were there as well as in San Francisco or New York. The larger European companies obviously wanted the larger audiences and had briefer seasons, while we wanted to integrate ourselves down to the simple common denominator of our American public. Today there are small companies taking advantage of these paths that we opened.

In Newburgh, New York, we came under the local management of my dear friend, Bess Wallach, who had brought many well-known stars to the audiences of Newburgh, and had made a definite place for herself in the cultural life of the city. My beloved Bess (Patte, when I first knew her) was one of my precious pals of the old days with Daly. Later she married Carl Wallach, raised a splendid family of girls and boys, and then settled down to the business of bringing society and art

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together in the theater of her town. Bess' personal art was song; and her personal assets a most delicious sense of humor and an unfailing loyalty to her friends.

I think no dancing company in America has ever penetrated so far and so intensively as we did during those tours under Mayer's management. And because of that we had a chance to observe not only how extensively the ideals and work of Denishawn had infiltrated, but to what degree the small towns and the cities were waking to a dance consciousness.

As we swung through state after state and city after city it was borne in upon us with increasing urgency that here in the United States was indeed the possibility of a great dance consciousness and that here were thousands of young students, eager and willing to undergo the arduous task of either a dance career or the mastering of the dance as a social asset, a condition that presented a startling contrast to my first solo tour fifteen years before. Then, too, we saw the possibility of focusing that dance consciousness in an institution of such magnitude as we had not yet dreamed of.

We had always dreamed of an American ballet, of a breeding place which would foster American dancing and lift it to the level of the other arts. We were anxious to absorb American talent into our companies as fast as possible, because we had very early encountered that indefinable element of suspicion toward beauty and especially toward native talents which permeated our whole social fabric, and this prejudice had to be climbed over or broken through before our offering could be really given.

It had expressed itself in a thousand subtle ways, and we, as pioneers, had long been face to face with it. However, when the years finally came that we were the best box-office attraction in the dancing field, the minds of the business world as well as of society began to suspect that perhaps, right under their noses, was something of which they could be proud. But it has taken many years to accomplish this, and when we were beating out a trail through the wilderness of American appreciation we hardly dared to dream that there would be such a gesture as the Dance International in New York City in 1938. This growing pride in our American arts found a splendid focus in Anne Morgan and Louise Branch, who in one magnificent gesture pulled together evidences of a state of development of the dance in America which will lead on in the future to greater achievements.

But back at this time, in the seasons of 1924 and 1925, the best that Ted and I could do was to give as broad and stimulating a basis as

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possible for those youngsters who came to us. Many of them went out to distinctive careers, many others went back to their homes and carried a message of culture to practically every state in the union.

Out of the many auditions that Ted and I witnessed on tour, when eager teachers and eager parents begged us to watch their little girls dance, with every now and then a sturdy-minded little male wanting to do his tap dancing, or, in rare cases, his hornpipe, we were able to see a cross section of the American dance as it was being taught. A typical recital, which we sometimes watched when we had no matinee, revealed the ghastly deficiencies of our attitudes toward dance education—and I do not believe it has changed very much. Children, from three to ten years old, trained by a hard-working teacher, their costumes made and their hair frizzed by ignorant but ambitious mothers, were the victims of a terrible combination of slipshod technical efficiency and the vulgarization of childhood. These recitals confronted us with the favoritism toward children who could pay and the correlative lack of opportunity for the child of real talent. My mind was perpetually stirred to a deeper questioning of the causes of this futile and grotesque exhibition of childhood, this highest ambition of a baby of three to look like a Hollywood vamp, or the responsibility of those who allowed a sextette of youngsters, not six months at the bar, to come gaily out on their little bent feet with sagging knees and a pained expression on their faces. Mothers, at these recitals, invariably beamed with pleasure, and poor bewildered fathers, dragged in to see what daughter had been accomplishing with his hard-earned hundred dollars, dared not venture his opinion no matter how intensely he felt it.

What was it all leading to, I asked—and still ask—in despair, and why were we Americans so diabolically clever in our moneymaking and so vulgar and stupid about our art life? When I went home from one memorable exhibition of this kind, my first reaction was to blame the teacher, but that was too easy. The trouble lay much deeper. Ten to one that teacher was only doing what circumstances demanded and not in the least what she wanted to do. Finally I came to a conclusion, and wrote an article, which was published in the *Philadelphia Ledger* on what I called "Child Labor in Art." It was intended to be a play upon words, but the basic point was that we were doing in the arts what we most deplored outside the arts. We were exploiting not only immature ideas but immature children and demanding monetary results; we forced them to learn anything that could be sold and we capitalized on childish art in exactly the same way as we might capitalize on childish labor in a factory. Why don't we like to see children working in a

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factory? Primarily because we do not want to see their suffering or their stunted growth or their exploitation by something over which they have no control. I applied this principle to the art products of our country, and it fitted amazingly. I saw that the financial competition on the part of the dancing schools was slowly crushing the rich inspirations out of children. I saw that mothers who would willingly keep abreast of academic education or current events or even the latest exhibition of the graphic arts did not know a darn thing about dancing and, as far as I could see, made no effort in that direction.

I ended by pretty well exonerating the teacher, not because of sentiment but because she was the victim rather than the perpetrator of an artistic crime. I came irresistibly to the conclusion that she was not giving these children her best energies, first of all because the public generally had ■ be educated to appreciate the simple, lovely rhythms of childhood, and secondly because she was inevitably in competition, if she had any ideals at all, with a teacher who had none. And so she must descend to the same level of cheap surface teaching that was supplied by her competitor.

While this was generally true of what I will loosely call the American teacher of the dance, I must in justice say that here and there over the country was a handful of strictly traditional ballet teachers who were holding to their course, teaching conscientiously, and occasionally sending to New York a finished product of the old methods. To those men and women I pay my deep respects. But what I am trying to say in regard to the American scene as a whole is devastatingly true.

I saw that every dancing school of the new order, and this included our own, came under this indictment. We, too, had been guilty of making the dance a commercial commodity before that commodity had attained its mature development. The mind of the average parent had infected the pupil so that there was no genuine respect for a real art. If a girl had a beautiful soprano voice her mother and her teacher, if they were at all intelligent, recognized the fact that it would probably take the better part of ten years before that girl could apply even in the chorus of the Metropolitan Opera House. But in the dancing schools that same mother and child expected to have a marketable product turned out within a year or, at the most, two years. I felt so keenly that the whole beautiful rhythmic energy of life, as exemplified by childhood, should somehow be released from those ignoble bonds of ignorance and commercialism. So a plan arose in my mind which I called a Community Studio. This studio was to be built and enjoyed by the community as the final flowering of its civilized life. My scientific

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approach left, as usual, much to be desired. But roughly my idea was that some wealthy patrons should be asked to lend a plot of ground for ten years, then a committee would be formed of a hundred or more local families with children. An architect would be asked to give his services and artists asked to cooperate, while businessmen were approached for the financing. A running budget would be apportioned by the year, and a first-class dancing teacher would be provided, one who could—and here was the great point of my scheme—give her entire time to teaching and performing instead of, as is now the case, worrying about the rent, getting out new leaflets to drum up trade, and slowly discovering that the school she loves is turning into a monster which drains her lifeblood without providing the release for her spirit of which she had dreamed.

These centers were to be scattered on the outskirts of all big cities and would take care of many more dancing teachers than were now in existence. Classes would be taught along technical, inspirational, and cultural lines. There would be noncommercial performances, where the children could dance not only for pleasure but as a sport. Then in the evening the same beautiful studio would be turned over to the adolescent boys and girls for ballroom dancing, which would be held under infinitely better conditions than the cabarets provided.

Beginning on this basis, it was not difficult to see other uses for these studios. A whole section of the graphic arts could be set aside for the older people, where they would find joy and release in those delayed art expressions which the business of parenthood had denied them. In a word, it was to be a center of free art for the people and by the people.

I saw very clearly that it would take from two to five years of labor on my part to put my idea across. I did speak of it at a woman's luncheon in San Francisco, and one member of the club forgot to eat her meal as she listened to my plans. She said she felt it contained the answer to the question of thousands of really cultured women who did not know where to send their daughters to learn dancing as they instinctively felt it should be learned. Perhaps this was a scheme which belongs to ten or twenty years from now. It is obviously a social problem, and as such I could not stop my own career and the activities of the school and give myself to its furtherance, but I have always cherished it as a solution to a grievous problem.

It is clear that a principle, entirely different from the one Denishawn and every other school in the country was running on, would have to be put into effect. Unconsciously I was harboring ideas which ■ car-



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ried out would have been a kind of overthrow of the government of Denishawn itself, which was distinctly operating under paternal capitalism. We earned as much money as we could and then turned around and spent it on our own children. For heaven knows we laid aside no bank account for ourselves. If this idea had been carried out on a national scale it would probably shift inevitably toward support of the various Denishawn branches by the states in which they were located, and we would, without money and without price, have been forever free from the burden of the commercial system and able to produce those visions which now stood little chance of ever seeing the light of day.

This was the height of the Denishawn influence. It had by now focused itself in the minds of the public in its two distinct phases, the school and the company. To many people the Denishawn company was an artistic entity touring America and other countries, and the school had its various locations either in the West or in New York, and there the matter rested. But in the minds of the thousands of teachers and students who had by now come through the doors of Denishawn and emerged with some equipment for the dance, there had slowly risen an artistic ideal, not easily defined but very living, which I like to believe has not disappeared from America. Although the school might be in Los Angeles or Peterborough, the students who came to it were registered from Florida to Maine, from Oregon to Pennsylvania, with a small sprinkling from Europe or Japan. And the company drawing upon these students had for a period of ten years played every state in the union. One can easily imagine the influence of this school for good or ill. Much of its influence was received with gratitude and then reinterpreted. Many of the teachers and the young artists from the small towns voiced their joy in the years they had spent in the school or the hours they had spent in the theater seeing the results of the school, and dance centers not officially related to Denishawn sprang up over the years.

Certain ones come vividly to my mind, and I shall perhaps be doing a great injustice of forgetfulness to a number of other faithful Denishawners who created real centers for values which went beyond mere technical dancing. If I have so omitted from the account those who should by every right be included I can only sincerely ask their forgiveness.

Many of them were not completely Denishawn, but they included Denishawn in their other classes. Mary Hazel Benedict of Detroit, ■ keenly intelligent and faithful young teacher, carrying on a real burden

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of beauty in an otherwise commercial city; the blessed Hart School of Dallas—Mrs. Hart always giving us welcome and courage as we passed through and sending students to imbibe from the fountains of Denishawn; Edith James, also of Dallas, who does beautiful work with society girls; Estelle Dennis of Baltimore, with her valiant little theater; and Katherine Laidlaw in Portland, Oregon.

However, in contrast to these faithful ones were the inevitable products of a growing dance consciousness, the critics, official and unofficial—young intelligentsia who gathered in smoke-filled studios discussing the merits and deficiencies of the dance, and whose final mature conclusion forced them to the opinion that the Denishawn contribution could not, after all, be very significant, since they were to be seen so constantly in vaudeville or in musical comedy, where doubtless they were amassing a fortune that would be spent upon their private lives.

Now when we use the phrase "an artist has commercialized his output" we assume a knowledge of the fact that the artist first of all need not have done so and, second, that he has sold his birthright for a mess of personal pottage.

But the financial structure—or lack of it—which was such a basic element in giving to America whatever beauty and idealism we were capable of is really a very different story. Many patrons, seeing our packed houses in San Francisco or Kansas City or New York would very naturally wonder why we found it necessary to step from one vaudeville engagement into another. But, alas, they did not know the things that Ted and I knew. They did not know that although we had excellent managers we were the ones who footed the bills, for there was no subsidy for Denishawn. At the height of the Mayer tours our receipts for one season were as high as \$200,000. And this, from our pioneering side, was a hopeful sign. But on the side of business we knew that our commission to Daniel Mayer amounted to \$40,000, our salaries to the company \$44,000, our railroad fares \$56,000, our advertising and photographs \$28,000, our costumes and scenery \$20,000, our insurance and replacements \$2,000, and our own personal living expenses \$10,000. Which makes, by anybody's addition, exactly the amount we took in.

From time to time Ted focused these facts in print in his usual vivid manner, and I am much indebted to him for the résumé. My father used to say, when he had spent an especially hard day on the farm and the frost had nipped the garden, "There must be some way of being just as poor without working so hard." But pioneers never have found that way. We both of us had a holy fear of debt, a fetish, perhaps. I

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remember once when we were in Boston, visiting George Copeland, the pianist, I expressed myself very freely on this subject. George was sitting at his piano over which a Spanish shawl had been thrown, playing one of his irresistible Spanish pieces. I stood it as long as I could, and then began to dance. Pretty soon, as the music grew faster and faster, I snatched the shawl off the piano and danced until I was exhausted. When I finished George exclaimed, "There! That's the kind of thing you should be doing in concert instead of this dreadful vaudeville business." "But, George," I explained patiently, "we have debts to pay, and that's the only way we can meet them." George looked up with genuine astonishment and said, "What have artists to do with debts?" As we left the house, I announced very firmly to Ted, "George is a great artist, but that is the most immoral thing I ever heard!" As time went on, I wondered.

As Ted said many times, "Remember we did not set out to make money, but to make history." If to some degree we did not accomplish this, then the whole situation would be too fantastic and cruel to contemplate. Certainly we made no profit. And there were moments when I grew wildly resentful. I had quite a struggle over the Russian ballet. In the midst of one of our busiest seasons, when as a native American art we were making a manful effort to keep our foothold, we learned that the ballet had a guarantee from the Metropolitan Opera management that their debts up to a startling figure would be absorbed. Our quarrel was in no way with the Russian ballet, which had already created a whole new world of art for Europe, but with the fact that a great institution like the Metropolitan could not have its eyes open sufficiently to see what was rising around it and give the same bitterly needed support for the home product.

However, during all those seasons of stress there were a rare few, friends or relatives, who showed their appreciation in ways which allowed us to keep going and to produce that beauty which spread itself not only over America but over Europe and the Far East as well. Ted's beloved Aunt Kate Rauch and her husband, the fine and generous Lee, flew to our rescue on a number of fateful occasions; Mother Vanderveer and Eugenia, who began first as a Denishawn student and then discovered that she had an exquisite voice, gave tangible proof that what they derived from Denishawn was worth their generous support; Guy and Marie Currier, Paul Plunkett of the old farm days, and many others who are woven into the fabric of this story proved again and again that they were staunch believers in the tribe of Denishawn.

To those who have thrilled to the tales of our early frontiersmen and

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pioneers, who have read the stories of the courage and farsightedness that opened up new tracts of land for others to inhabit, will probably not need to be shown that these new frontiers of the mind, of the arts, of the spirit, follow the same paths of personal renunciation, endless labor and suffering, and that the material rewards, the comfortable living, are as uncertain in the one as in the other. I am not complaining; we did not complain at Denishawn—or rather we did not complain unless we were attacked, our motives questioned, and our methods brought under the criticism of ignorant or malicious minds. The end, inevitably, of all pioneering stories will always be an external poverty, but there will also be as compensation a rich residue of experience and joy in so great an adventure.

There are periods in life when certain levels of equilibrium are maintained, when a great cycle begins and arrives at its fullness and then declines; when there are neither very great heights nor very great depths, but for some time a succession of labors intended to sustain human relationships on as even a keel as possible. After such an epoch passes it appears in retrospect like a plateau, not rising very high out of the plains, yet of sufficient exhilaration to keep life tense and moving. So these years under the Mayer contract seem like a plateau of work and plans and human relationships.

But at the end of this period, and at a dramatic moment on the tour, Daniel Mayer suddenly appeared in Los Angeles to announce the breathtaking news that we had a contract for the Orient. Mr. Asway Strok had come from the Far East and had made a definite proposition for us to appear in Japan, China, India, and the Far East.

During the long months on the train we had talked to the children of the possibility of going to the Orient. They had sat around and listened to my tales of India and Japan as I had derived them from books over the years. Ted, of course, had always been fascinated by the prospect, and when the announcement came from Mayer a long thrill ran down the whole company.

How can I describe my feelings? Part of me responded with the same spontaneous joy as the others, but the deeper, more intimate part of me was depressed beyond words. When I went to the Orient I wanted to go alone; I did not want to take the endless janglings of company and performances and drudgery that had infected the last twelve years. I wanted to bring a sensitive, alive instrument to absorb not only the aesthetic wonders of the ancient East, but those deeper

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realizations of the universal human spirit in its quest for reality. In my journal I only hinted at the feelings that controlled me.

I have been looking forward at the end of this three years' contract to a great period of rest and peace, a period of calling my soul my own, of directing certain of my own affairs in my own way and having time and leisure to let the spirit well up in my consciousness into new and beautiful patterns to be expressed when and how it was possible. Now, in a moment, this whole concept seemed to be swept away, and still another period of hurrying and confusion to be contracted for again. However, I have been thinking about the whole situation, and the biggest thought that comes out of it is this, that an objective period of harmony and solitude will never come unless I generate it myself, right where I am.

My own heart's reluctance about this trip is Mother, but I have a simple faith that God will not let me do this thing and make her suffer. In a word, he will keep her well and in peace until I return, and her dear angel, Calkins.

Since it seemed impossible that my personal feelings should put an obstacle in the way of what would amount to a great experience for all of us, the contract was signed, and the whole set of our minds began on a new pattern. We had nearly nine months to prepare for the trip, and I would have been less than human if I had not been caught up in the excitement of programs and the thousand and one things that demanded our attention. But always in the deepest recesses of my heart was my longing to embark upon this great adventure alone.

The moment that the contract was signed Ted announced without any prompting from me that Buzz must somehow go with us. It is not difficult to imagine my joy at this healing of old feuds, this spontaneous affection on Ted's part. A wire was sent to Buzz at Denver, where he and Emily and the boys were living. We could almost hear the detonations that this wire must have exploded in their midst. However, as is so often the case in the life of a family, it was not up to Buzz whether he could go, but to Emily. For I knew that Buzz would never go if Em had not been able to accept this really great challenge to her faith and love as well as the additional responsibility of holding the family together while he embarked upon his long-delayed adventure. But Emily met this challenge magnificently, and proved to all of us what a wise choice Buzz had made in this splendid running partner.

Before I left California I said good-by to Mother. I was purposely a little vague about when we were to sail or how long we would be away. But she was brave about it, and thank heaven was there in her little apartment when I returned.

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It is difficult to imagine the hectic preparations that began. We still had a tour to finish, Ted had a large teachers' course to conduct in the summer, and we had a full repertory to prepare, drops to be designed in place of the heavy scenery, and new costumes to be put into order.

The school went back to its foster parents and, about the time we left, Ronny Johansen came from Sweden as a guest teacher. Ronny danced for us one evening soon after her arrival and it was a case of love at first sight on both sides. A splendid, trained body, a piquant face, a sensitive mind and a delicious humor are Ronny Johansen's equipment, and her programs on her subsequent tours to America have proved her one of the significant figures today in the modern dance. To me, personally, Ronny does the difficult but necessary thing of subordinating technique, and letting her spirit dance.

As the summer was moving toward our sailing date in August we learned that Louis Horst was not going with us, but to Germany instead. Our consternation was shattering, but Louis had made up his mind. In a sense, when he left the camp, following Martha by a year or so, the signal was given for the dissolution of Denishawn. Of course we did not realize this at the time, but it turned out in retrospect that Louis, as one of the chief pillars of the church, let the roof sag at the place where he had been, and it was never really mended again. I do not intend for a moment to put a heavy responsibility on his shoulders, for he had every right after years of devoted service to go where his greater developments lay. But we missed him badly.

We were confronted with the problem of finding a new musical conductor, and the man we needed turned up, a young, well-cultivated musician in the person of Clifford Vaughn. He took over the post in time to conduct for us on that memorable occasion when we first appeared at the Lewisohn Stadium.

The two nights we danced at the Stadium were immensely stimulating. We were truly grateful to the Guggenheims for providing this amazing, open-air auditorium where music lovers could find relief from the hot New York nights and for an unbelievably low price get the cream of musical entertainment.

But we personally suffered many things of many conditions as our price for playing this distinguished engagement. First of all was the tremendous strain upon us all of adjusting our movements away from the percussive tones of the piano to the resilient tonalities of a great symphony orchestra. This was a task we had faced several times, but only those who have gone through the experience know the subtle change of values that takes place. In spite of this we had but one

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rehearsal and that on the morning of the performance. And, moreover, we had to battle the attitude of the men comprising the personnel of the New York Philharmonic. Almost to a man they felt themselves ensconced in their positions as integral factors in a great organization on which millions of dollars had been spent, and resisted doggedly this oncoming new art. Our regrettable lack of rehearsal and necessarily inadequate productions were exposed side by side with the finesse of a long-established, well-supported institution, and we felt it keenly, the more so because very few of these musicians gave any encouragement to our young efforts.

As against this attitude two or three individuals stood out in sharp contrast, and the one who did everything in his power to soften the cruel adjustments between our unpolished work as dancers and the superfine technicalities of the orchestra was our beloved Hans Lange. He did not conduct for us at this time, but he did everything else.

Our program was substantially the same as the one we were taking to the Orient. The first movement of the *Sonata Pathétique*, Ted's *Adonis Plastique*, Doris' famous *Hoop* dance, Charles' *Danse Americaine* by Mowry, the *Boston Fancy* by Eastwood Lane, and Ted's *Invocation to the Thunder Bird*.

Of course we were immensely pleased that we broke all records.

We were coming nearer and nearer to August. At the end of July we gave a farewell party at the Carnegie Hall studio. All our friends came to wish us bon voyage. There was much clinging together and weeping on all our parts, and I made a beautiful prima donna exit with my arms full of flowers, crying to those who were left with the destinies of the school, "Carry on!"

Our hectic rush did not let up all the way across the country. We had our own ideas of doing things, and certainly we were resourceful. Our costume problems had not all been met, and in some Middle Western town where we were changing trains Ted and I set out for the local Woolworth's to do what we could for some costume shortcomings in the *Siamese Ballet*. It was fairly early in the morning and not many shoppers were about. Ted and I were in our usual state of rush and excitement. As soon as we entered we deployed to the various departments, hunting for material to make one of the tall, helmetlike Siamese headdresses.

Presently Ted shouted to me over several counters, "Look, Ruthie, I've found it!" and he held up a perforated collander from the tinware department. As I dashed over to inspect it he took off his own hat and clapped the collander on his head.

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We were happily oblivious to any customers, and both our voices carry well. The young lady who was waiting on us began to look alarmed and glanced a little questioningly at her fellow clerk across the aisle. And when I exclaimed, "Yes, it will do beautifully," and dashed to the children's department where I snatched up a tin horn and stuck it on top of the collander, saying, "That's just the thing," the little clerk was sure we were quite mad.

Thrusting the things into her hands, I hurried to buy a bottle of gold paint, while Ted flew to another department for wire to fasten the horn to the collander. By this time the whole shop had ceased to function, and it was a question as to whether to call the manager or the police. But Ted and I knew that our Siamese troubles were ended, and we could get on the train again with an easy conscience.

All along the way we picked up friends or family of the company and the journey was something of a triumphant tour. Just to feel our mettle, we played a performance at the University of Seattle and then set out for points north. Part of the way from Seattle to Vancouver Ted and I hung out of the cab window of the engine, for by special permission of the engineer, a darling old soul much concerned with his indigestion, we were allowed to pull the throttle for the crossroads.

The company was feverishly writing last letters and wondering if they had clothes enough for the Orient. Buzz and Stanley Fraser, our electrician, were concerned about the luggage, and June was wondering if the news people would get down in time to take films before our departure.

Ted, as usual, had some writing to do. In these days he was the writingest fellow I ever knew. He and Ara Martin, one of our new girls, were closeted from New York to Yokohama finishing his book *The American Ballet*.

Everything went off beautifully. The film company did arrive on time, all the delayed families came, and Ted and June successfully got the company up the gangplank. Besides Ara and Stan and ourselves, Doris and her mother, Pearl and Clifford, were some of our faithfuls—Jane Sherman and Anne Douglas; Jeordie Graham, Martha's sister; Ernestine Day and Pauline Lawrence; George Steares and Charles—and the new girls, Grace Burroughs, Edith James, and Mary Howry. We were quite an impressive sight as we rushed about hunting our rooms, peeping in to get a look at the dining salon, and wondering if the captain was good looking.

My last vision of America was seeing Dr. Day, Tiny's beloved father,



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standing alone on the wharf, while Tiny leaned sobbing against the ship rail as we slowly drew away from shore.

There were forty-two missionaries and families aboard, and we were a never-ending source of interest to them. It seems that their entire preconception about dancers had to be renovated. And we had to admit that we were decidedly behind the times on missionaries. The one person that stood out for me on the long voyage was Mary Ferguson, Executive Secretary of the Peking Association of Chinese Arts, whose father, Dr. John Ferguson, of Peking, was called "the grand old American of China." She was a charming person and we were to see a great deal more of her when we reached China.

The boat had hardly left the shore before my spirit and my body failed me. After seeing that everybody had found his quarters and the luggage all recovered and put in the staterooms, and the places found at the table, and knowing that this big company was all together at one time under one roof, the inevitable reaction set in. Ted dug himself into his stateroom and slept and wrote for days on end, and I collapsed on my berth and, with meals sent in, went off into some other world of dreams and visions that had long been denied me.

India lay somewhere at the end of this journey, and my journals will tell of my discovery.



**CHAPTER XIII: India Waits at the End of the Journey:** WHAT did I bring home from that long, hard, fascinating journey? This dream and goal toward which I had so often yearned in spirit! This Orient! Now that it has come and gone, like a watch in the night, what residue of wisdom, what beauty in the heart, remains?

I cannot even now answer my own questions. I have not yet attained that certain vantage point from which I may make the deepest evaluation. But I know that it was all part of the Great Journey, and was accomplished with human success, and added artistic elements and colors to our repertoire of dances. But I shall doggedly persist in saying that "sometime I should like to go to the Orient."

What actually happened on this tour, I will let my journals tell as best they may, because they were written on the way.

*At sea.* I am sitting in my steamer chair on the upper deck, between the lifeboats. It has taken a month to attain this isolation, but at last it is here. I am alone, the blessed sun is shining through a mist, and there is the soft swish of deep blue sea against the sides of the ship below.

I do *not* realize that we are on the way to the Orient. Just now my inner soul is too disturbed—it feels too small to grasp a big sensation of wonder. My mind surveys the coming months with expectation, but my soul in a strange way shrinks from the task.

*Yokohama.* I arose early to behold the islands of Nippon and I stood at the ship's rail in silent expectancy.

I saw the sacred mountain rising from the sea, with clouds about its feet. I saw the Island in the early morning, lying on the sea.

I am as one returned to a home from which I have been exiled.

*Tokyo.* Yokohama means Japanese customs men, very polite and efficient. Little brown porters dashing about collecting baggage. We are saying good-by to the captain and the missionaries whom we promised to meet again. And now we are going down the gangplank.

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To our bewildered gaze we seem bombarded with photographers and reporters asking sibilant questions. Then to our delight we are suddenly confronted by two rows of charming Japanese women actresses, sent to us from the Imperial Theater to greet us on our arrival. Their whitened, uplifted faces, their low bowings and eager, welcoming smiles, handing us each a bouquet, seem to us the very heart of Japan.

We soon reach Tokyo and meet an extraordinarily charming man, Mr. Yamamoto, director of the Imperial Theater of Tokyo where we are to play.

*August 23, 1925.* We have had our first jinrikisha ride—the night we arrived all seventeen of us, through the brilliantly lighted streets, like a parade, ending our ride near the moat of the Emperor's Palace, gleaming black and mysterious in the night.

The next day, Mr. Yamamoto took us over the Imperial Theater, where we are to play. It is one of the finest theaters I have ever seen, more European in style and equipment than American, an institution, not merely a commercial enterprise. From Mr. Yamamoto down to the stagehands there is a fine courtesy rarely seen in America.

The theater itself is a very handsome building, decorated in the Continental manner. It has large, ample foyers, beautiful stairways, a very large stage, with many dressing rooms, offices, special rehearsal rooms. There are three cafés within its walls, and one on the roof. It seats seventeen hundred people, and its stage revolves accurately and without noise. It has a very elaborate switchboard, with which it is possible to get almost any combination of light desired. The players are very friendly, and today through an interpreter I carried on quite a conversation with several of the girls. On second meeting they seemed even more attractive than before.

The second evening we were here we attended the theater en masse. The theater opens at four-thirty and continues until ten-thirty (time out for dinner), within the theater walls. We came in for the third drama, *Kunisada Chuji*, a four-act play by Rifu Yukitomo. The scenes were exquisitely painted, and Shojiro Sawada gave a very beautiful performance. The pantomime was so perfect that we had little trouble in following the story. The plays this month are modern and the theater is filled nightly.

My first evening in a real Japanese theater ended with the curtain descending upon a veranda overlooking a grove of maple trees in the

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autumn, the heroine leaning against a slender pillar, murmuring, "My life is like these falling autumn leaves and soon the winter of my heart will come."

Last night our first teahouse banquet, given by Mr. Yamamoto at the Maple Club. Lovely open rooms and the calling of the cicadas in the garden below, the soft swish of tabi on the yielding mats, and rooms of us eating Japanese food. Besides our company only men were invited—actors, newspapermen, critics, writers. Japanese geisha flutter down the long room like creatures from another planet with their coiffed black lacquer hair and their softly undulating bodies. Their pale sleeves flutter behind them as they move forward like a flock of birds and settle briefly in front of each guest, with the inevitable sake bottle to replenish our cups. Then against the gold screens at the far end appear the dancers in fantastically beautiful costumes, with fans and parasols and tiny white feet moving swiftly over the polished floor. It is sheer enchantment.

Everyone in the city seems to recognize us. It makes us feel good when people bow and smile on the street and say "Denishawn" or, taking a newspaper from a kimono sleeve, point to our pictures and smile in a mostly friendly manner.

At last we are here in a Kabuki Theater—that semiclassical, semi-popular playhouse, which presents plays with a propaganda content, but manages to see that they are done with such vitality and gusto that the vast audience is never bored. I'm smoldering because we have never had the sense to grasp hold of our drama and use it for the teaching of those virtues of our national life which we wish to see manifested. Instead of that, we let the cloak-and-suit gentlemen of Hollywood and the businessmen of Broadway completely control our theater.

There is a huge stage in front of us, where a lovely curtain of flowers is slowly descending into a slot in the front of the stage and revealing the opening act, the *décor* of which is done with vivid and consummate skill. Practically over our shoulder comes the leading man, striding down the flower walk at the left, which runs from the back of the orchestra seats onto the stage and along which the various principals make their tremendously impressive entrances. Our heads are nearly twisted off trying to look back and see where the actors come from and yet not miss anything that is going forward on the stage. There are countless changes of scene, bewildering array of costumes, swift dramatic movements—and at other times unbearable silences, filled with tense meanings. The theater is gorgeous with color and lights, and the

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audience plainly has come for a whole day's entertainment, as in between the acts they frequent the restaurants.

*Nikko, the Kanaya Hotel. In the rain August 26.* Best beloved and I are sitting by an open window, looking at the mist-clad hills of Nikko. It is early, but as we gaze down upon a road that winds among the hills we see tiny figures in blue and white kimonos, high geta and huge pale rain umbrellas. Now we know why the artists have ever painted this land in the mists. There is the roaring of the river tumbling down under the sacred bridge, and the soft swish of rain on the trees. . . .

We go up the tree-lined avenues in reverent mood, and we come to the great Temple of the Three Buddhas. We enter. It is vast and dark. I lean against a great pillar and regard with as yet uncomprehending eyes these huge and mysterious images looming far up into the shadows. I try to imagine that they are a thousand years old!

Now two Buddhist priests in white are standing behind their little black lacquer tables. One has a beard, and his voice is rich and melodious. We do not know what he says, he is speaking to pilgrims, but his voice harmonizes with the beauty and silence of the shrine. We leave reluctantly.

*Tokyo, September 2.* Last night we gave our first performance, and it went off mechanically as well as possible, considering the conditions. Our folks, of course, worked like Trojans. We were amazed to see the wonderful efficiency of the theater coolies, working silently on stage scenery and properties, dressed only in a loin cloth but later—and this one of the many astonishing things about the Japanese theater—having their hot bath right there in the theater after each session of work.

The audience was fair in size and fair in enthusiasm—so, at least, it seemed to us backstage—but after it was all over we were disappointed, tired and depressed.

The audience was composed mostly of Japanese. The Crown Prince sat in a box and many Japanese notables were present, with a sprinkling of Americans. They were constantly coming and going, making it difficult for us to concentrate. Whether the Japanese enjoyed the performance I do not know—only the box office and time can tell!

*The next morning.* The Baron Ishimoto wrote in the *Japan Advertiser*: "It is natural for Japanese to look on America and conclude that nothing new or creative can be found in the land of radio and

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automobiles. But an evening in the Imperial Theater was enough to revolutionize our opinion.

"The Denishawn Dancers convinced the Japanese that America is now creating its own art, and moreover it has something very suggestive of the future. Whenever a historian tries to write a book on the relations of the United States and Japan, he cannot ignore the coming of the Denishawn Dancers in 1925 to Japan, because by their appearance on the stage of Tokyo the attitude toward America in respect to art has been completely changed."

And the *Macho-Shinbun* says: "After the opening night of the Denishawn Dancers our every expectation has been met and the hearts of all dance lovers are dancing with joy. We say at once that Miss St. Denis is a very creative dancer full of originality and her dancing is filled with grace and dignity. Mr. Shawn is the finest male dancer we have seen. His body is beautiful and splendid, his dancing is thoroughly masculine. The great art of Denishawn should not be missed by anyone in Japan."

And, lastly, the *Hochi-Shinbun*: "We have never been so moved as by the dancing of Denishawn. When Miss Anna Pavlova came we admired her technical skill, but these artists bring us a spiritual and physical beauty of dance and I believe that this beauty is a more eloquent and vital thing in dance than mere skill.

"These dancers are the admiration of the Japanese. We ask the Japanese dancers to consider this company and whenever they are inclined to take on a foreign style to follow the example of the Denishawn dancers who are on a basis and principle which is sympathetic to true Oriental souls."

[All through the Orient certain of the dances were received with especial enthusiasm. Ted's *Adonis* was extravagantly admired, his *Hopi Indian* caught the popular fancy everywhere, my *Ishtar* was a favorite, and Doris' *Hoop* and *Scarf* dances always demanded an encore.]

*September* ——— Among the innumerable artistic mistakes we are making—and I grow hot all over when I think of it—was dashing off yesterday to Mitsukoshi, the big department store, to buy all the girls some kimonos for publicity pictures. I thought I was getting summer kimonos, and it wasn't for some time that I learned they were bathrobes! We got into our 'rikishas and, horrors! made a display of our ignorance. The populace showed their innate control and courtesy, however. Standing by the curb, they watched us dash in a line down

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the boulevard and gazed open-mouthed until we came abreast. Then, smothering their snickers, they dropped their eyes while we passed. When I learned of my mistake, I wanted to hide my head.

*September 13.* We are sitting at the back of this Nō Theater. It is in the compound of the Kudan Temple. The chorus has come in, and the musicians; and now a priest enters with his attendants. He explains who he is and tells of his journey.

Our kind friend, Dr. Anesaki of the Imperial University, a noted philologist and one of the most gracious and cultured figures of Japan, has brought us. We are accompanied by some of the company, including Stan. We are seated in chairs put here for those who cannot sit upon their feet for many hours, and we are looking and listening intently to this Nō play. Two women have entered. They are in gorgeous red brocade kimonos. They stand a long while, the chorus chants, and the drums clack and the high flute gives long, drawn-out notes. We do not understand; we can only feel. What a strange, archaic form of long-gone-by beliefs and emotions. The audience is fanning itself and reading the libretto, which it has brought, following closely the words or music or action.

Between the acts we went upstairs to have food and cool drinks and were taken backstage to see the actors dressed—it was most interesting. While there Prince Tokugawa was brought up to us by Dr. Anesaki. He spoke English and was gracious. Now I am back in my seat, waiting for the opening of the last play.

The curtains that are raised at the end of the passage are striped black and yellow, red, peacock blue, and green, with heavy red tassels. The priest wears a soft deep blue kimono, a tan overkimono with wide sleeves, peaked cap in blue gray which hangs nicely down the back, and carries a rosary with white tassels. The play proceeds—enters now the evil spirit of the man, who loved the woman so long. He comes, wearing a long dark blue veil over his head. Strange objectifying of human errors and passion. I get the sense of strong conflict between forces—brooding and resentful, possibly—on the part of the lover. He has now thrown off his blue veil and has come up slowly and menacingly behind the woman. It took him perhaps a minute or a minute and a half to arrive at the edge of the stage, but to Stan, who was sitting with us, it seemed a week. When he described his experience to friends later he said, "Oh, yes, I've seen one of them Nō plays and its no-o-o—with me all down the line. Them actors dash on the stage two steps for

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the first half hour, and if you watch them closely you can see that they almost move."

The fundamental principles of the Nō, as I understand them, find a very deep answering agreement in my own life, because I have always believed that Beauty should not be divorced from Truth in moral meaning. All the arts of our Western world have more or less gone their own way on purely æsthetic principles—quite unconcerned with religion or morals, and this is particularly so of the stage, which has utterly forgotten that it owes its origin to the mystery plays or temple ceremonials. In a word, religion, and in turn the church, has abandoned the stage, without its blessing, to its own self-willed career.

I am ever jealous for religion. That which is exquisite and fragile as well as that which is enduring and grand should be utilized in the service of religion and for the elevation of the arts.

And here in Japan, more than in any other country I have been in, this principle is exemplified.

*September 21. In the house and garden of Kitchibei Murai, a well-known banker.*

In a city that, Phoenix-wise, has risen from the ashes of her grief, there is a lovely garden that the gods have spared, where lawn and trees and gabled roofs lie in the golden sun by day and under the watching stars by night.

This garden is as the center of the wheel—that ancient symbol of the Law—and here in its quiet walks among the trees and lantern sentinels I meditate in peace, and for an hour let the circumference of the wheel turn on.

Yet it is not merely trees and sky that make this place. It is the spirit of understanding kindness that pervades it, like a perfume.

When I first came to this treasure house and beheld the garden, my heart breathed thankfulness and praise, and when I saw the screens of ancient loveliness and flowers placed with such faultless art I knew I was in the presence of something more than art or a garden—I was in the midst of a great and universal Personality.

Kitchibei Murai, banker, is also art patron and what is more, art lover, and Mme. Murai, it seems, was lady-in-waiting to the Empress and this accounts for the warm yet ceremonial atmosphere that pervades this lovely place.

[Mrs. Frank Vanderlip, through her sister Lillian Cox, had provided us with an introduction to this charming couple, as well as another,



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equally valuable, to Viscount Shibusawa. This occasion was the tea party given for the entire company by Mr. Murai on the grounds of his beautiful estate.

Long months afterwards, upon sending some photographs from India that Mme. Murai had especially admired, I wondered at the long delay of her acknowledgment. When I finally received her note it was strange and pathetic and touched me deeply. She said: "Your kind note and letter is received. Since your happy visit to our home my beloved husband has passed away. Upon receipt of your photographs I took them and your note and going into the room where reposes my husband's *ihai* [the mortuary tablet on which are inscribed the names of those in the family who have died and have here registered their heavenly names]—and I laid the photographs near the *ihai* and read to him the kind words of your remembrance."]

*September 24.* Today on the roof of the Imperial Theater Buzz took moving pictures of Ted and me and the company and Koshiro Matsumoto, the leading actor of the Imperial Theater, in a dancing lesson. Mr. Matsumoto has done the incredibly generous thing of having his assistants as well as himself teach us some of the steps and rhythms of Japanese dancing. Ted is terribly intrigued with doing a Japanese dance drama called *Momiji-Gari* when we get home, wondering if he dare play the part of the court lady, as of course any Japanese actor would do, as well as the demon. Matsumoto says, "Why not?" so they go to it. Matsumoto took great interest helping us to get costumes, music, and above all teaching Ted and the girls, as well as Charles and George, the correct mannerisms of this old classic. It is unbelievable that a man as important as Matsumoto would take the time without money and without price to labor through these elements for a group of foreign dancers.

His wife, Mme. Fujima, a dainty charming little person, is much intrigued with having Pearl make her one of those fluffy little dresses in tarlatan that the *pas de trois* wear in their little waltz.

*September* ——— Today we had the privilege of attending this splendid actor-dancer, Matsumoto, in his dressing room while he was making up. His four or five attendants are standing about him, handing him the multitudinous objects of a perfect Japanese make-up. We have never met a more unselfish, unegocentric artist than this delightful man.

Tonight, as Tiny and Ted and I are leaving the theater very late, a

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stagehand appears, standing near the stairs which lead down to the hot baths. He is absolutely nude save for a large blue and white towel over his arm, which at the moment is held in front of him. But as we pass, by way of saying good night, with a courteous movement he makes a wide-open gesture with the arm carrying the towel, and bows his head almost to his knees. Tiny colors behind her ears. Ted and I can scarcely contain ourselves until we get outside.

*September* ——— We spent a lovely day with those modernists, the Ishimotos. The Baron and Baroness invited us down to see the great Buddha at Kamakura. They have a little house near this overwhelming image, and we were invited to lunch. We talked of a thousand political and social matters with two of the keenest minds we have met in Japan. We were, of course, enchanted with the Baron's marvelous notice of our performance.

*September 26.* We are riding on a train going from Tokyo to Shizuoka. This was our last day in Tokyo. Last night our last performance. We cannot realize that our engagement at the Imperial Theater is over. It has been a wonderful experience. Crowds came to the station this morning to see us off.

There are so many important things we have done. Viscount Shibusawa's party, with many distinguished guests assembled to meet us. The Viscount himself, eighty-five or thereabouts, a shrewd, witty, charming old figure, full of gracious courtesy, arranged to have a tea ceremony for us. The English tea was served afterwards in one of the great rooms of the house, while Ted and I and the Viscount talked philosophy as best we might through the interpretation of the editor of one of the big Japanese newspapers, a charming man.

Two days ago we went on a visit prearranged by Dr. Anesaki to the Music Department of the Imperial Court. This was in many ways a unique experience, Zimbalist being the only other foreign artist to have received this honor. We took a taxi off the main streets from the hotel and presently came to the wonderful wall of the Palace grounds. That wall, moss-covered and forbidding, was crowned by lovely trees that cast long shadows in the early morning, and were reflected in the moat that lies so black and still beneath them. We came to one of the ancient gates, which I never thought would open for us, but it did, and we were thrilled beyond words to have our taxi move toward this portal of the sacred precincts, and then stop for us to alight. Dr. Anesaki spoke some magical words to the guard and in a moment

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we were strolling, silent and awestricken, through the great inner wall, trying to realize that we were within the walls of the Imperial Palace.

Yet what a curious blending of old and new. A few of the maple trees gave off the faint perfume and colors of autumn, leaves rustled underfoot, and as we strolled away from the crumbling gate a warm autumnal silence filled the place.

Here and there were houses of various kinds, some horribly modern, each housing some office necessary for the Palace. Presently we strolled quietly through the leaves, feeling the ancient charm of this stronghold of real Japan. We came to a modern building with large rooms and offices, which housed the Music Department. Here we were met by the head of the department and several of his staff and friends, and were taken without the usual preliminary of tea to a large, light room filled with the ancient and incredibly beautiful costumes of the *Bungaku*, a court dance going back to 600 B.C. The two hours that followed were filled with the display of old books, costumes, properties, and the musical instruments of this particular dance, which is even now performed before the court twice a year by special dancers belonging to the Imperial family. The head and his assistants spread out the books and put on costumes and even danced a little, and made strange and really magnificent music with the instruments that they guard so preciously.

*September 28. By train, going to Nagoya for the beginning of our tour.* One-night stands are the same everywhere. To those who understand, this observation is sufficient. To those who do not, it is useless to describe!

*Later, in the dressing room.* My opinion of Japanese theaters is that our road theaters are about eleven points below. These here are well equipped, large, clean, lighted, and the attendants obliging. And everyone can have hot baths! The dressing rooms are large, matted rooms—this one is seven mats (which is the way rooms are measured)—and in this suite of two rooms which I possess there is even a *takonoma*, with a vase and two artificial chrysanthemums. Through a *shoji* I can see a bit of garden. The rain is falling in the bamboo leaves.

There is an interval of half an hour between acts, which enabled me to write this. Meanwhile, the audience has stretched its legs, and either had tea brought in to it or gone strolling about on an outer promenade, drinking shaved ice and sherbet, which is the favorite

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drink in hot weather. As Hearn so often said, the marvel of these well-behaved audiences is the babies: babies are here by the dozens, but during the performance not one cries!

*September 30.* Ever since my early Hearn readings I have longed to see the shrine at Ise. So like our visit to Nikko, we had no choice but to go on a day of rain. As we entered the grounds and approached the long path which led slowly upwards we saw a priest, clothed in white, bearing in his arms a sheaf of autumn boughs, cross our vision at the top of the path. As we gradually approached the shrine we realized that this great park, which constitutes the temple grounds, was in its austere coloring of trees and sky a contrast to the vivid colorings of art at Nikko. The temple is of unpainted wood and contains the sacred mirror, that great symbol of the Shinto faith. This temple is taken down every twenty years, and the splinters from its carefully chosen wood are distributed to the countless pilgrims that come to this sacred spot.

*Kyoto, Theater of the Geisha, October 2.* We had a charming luncheon at the home of the Reverend Wellborn and from there rushed here to greet an extraordinary old lady, Mme. Katayama, who is retiring from active stage work, on her eighty-eighth birthday!

We are now at the theater; the curtain is up on a green platform in the center of the stage. There she sits—eighty-eight years old and still dancing. She moves now with tremendous power. That this ancient geisha is still flourishing after a life well spent in gaiety is a source of consternation to the missionaries. She is only now retiring from the stage but not from teaching. This theater was a feminist theater long before we Western women took to cutting our hair. It is in the center of the geisha quarter of this ancient capital and this is where the queens of singing and dancing can show their wares to an interested world. The younger geishas flutter about us to explain the play, feeling a touching reverence for this aged but remarkable dancer.

*October 3.* This incredible place of Takaradzuka keeps us in perpetual amazement. A huge amusement center, half Coney Island, half concert hall, with a dancing school for girls who are being taught both the old methods and also tap and toe. Apparently the ideal here is to reproduce the Follies, and the Folies Bergère.

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Our last performance here at Takaradzuka was performed twice to nine thousand people.

*October 4.* That most generous soul, the Reverend Wellborn, took us to tea this afternoon to the Doshisha School, and then, to my unspeakable joy, to the inclosures of the old palace which housed the Emperor when Kyoto was the capital of Japan. He showed us room after room, all the *shojis* painted in soft golds and deep greens, depicting the life of those ancient days when picnics and skirmishes and monks and ladies of the court made life seem incredibly magical. As these rooms unfolded one after the other I began to realize that here was the very palace that that adorable Don Juan of Japan, the beloved Genji of Lady Murasaki's tales, carried on his court intrigues with the beautiful ladies who flitted through these corridors, and had tea under these golden ceilings.

*Kumamoto, October 19.* Strange, dead period when I do not feel anything! My outer self travels, dances, shops, and goes eagerly and willingly to see the various sights of palaces and temples and views of nature, but the inner me remains motionless in a curious, detached state, scarcely conscious of what is happening—that we are here in Japan, that we are showing at least a small portion of the stage art of America for the first time in the Orient. All this interests me. I am delighted that we are doing this. I was fully conscious of what I was doing when I signed the contract for this tour, but now some inner part of me remains aloof.

*October 26. Leaving Japan—on the wharf at Shimonaseki.* They want us back. We have vague plans of going home by Europe and both seeing and playing in Egypt. But this is uncertain and, believing that we might not return, there are genuine farewells and Mr. Yamamoto and all the leading actors and actresses of the Imperial Theater have laden us with flowers and called many *sayonaras* after us at the train.

Japan has filled my aesthetic sense with a curiously complete beauty, but my soul is untouched. I am waiting for India.

*October 31. On the Yangtze River, from Dairen to Tientsin.* I am now sitting on the upper deck of our little steamer that brought us last night from Dairen. We played a short and hectic engagement there, leaving a day sooner than we expected, much to the disgust of our manager, the local man named Yamomori. However, there was no

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train leaving for Tientsin, so we had to get this boat or lose our whole Tientsin engagement.

Dairen was a dramatic, unhappy, half-Russian, half-Parisian city. The very sunset as we waited at the wharf to see to the last of our luggage was a weird and awful thing.

Now in the mellow afternoon sunlight we are actually seeing China for the first time. We are steaming slowly toward Tientsin between the river banks that are at times mud villages, at times grain fields, and sometimes modern gasworks! On both sides of us are junks with sails, helped along by coolies with their long paddles.

All the grown men are in blue—trousers and shirt—and the children, apparently up to about twelve, in red.

*November 7. Dressing room, Empire Theater, Tientsin.* On to Peking! First we go and then we don't—now we stay and now we go! You see, there is a war on in China. Hast ever heard of war in China? Our train may be delayed, we may have adventures, but as it stands now at this time—10 P.M.—it looks as though my next scribble will be on the train going through warish country. I confess to mild nervous sensations in the region of my solar plexus; however, I believe that when we moved from our blessed United States the Lord traveled with us. (Apropos of the little boy who said, "Good-bye, God, we're moving to Kansas.")

*Peking, November 8. Dressing room of the theater.* Well, here we are. Every ambassador in town is present, so they say. A packed house and very enthusiastic.

This morning dear Miss Ferguson met us at the station to take us to the Peking hotel, and then to the lovely old Ferguson home for luncheon—a real Chinese home with huge compound and many lovely little houses. From the luncheon we drove immediately to the Forbidden City, parts of which have only recently been opened to the public. I cannot describe it—these palaces, these courtyards, these gates! . . .

A marvelous sense of serenity and peace in spite of the great intricate ornamentation—the traceries of marble and painted wood and jade. Back to the hotel for an hour's rest, and now we are in the theater.

So many invitations, we can't in this short time accept them all.

*Later.* After our performance tonight we had an extraordinary experience. Upon our arrival we had received greetings from Mei Lan

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Fang, China's greatest actor, but since we are only to be in Peking for three days we could not see his performance. So tonight, with the characteristic generosity of all the Orient, he offered to bring his company to our theater and perform one of his plays for us after our show was over. Not only we but our audience as well were keenly aware of this delightful gesture. Not a person left when the news went around that Mei Lan Fang was to appear. The company dashed around to the front without taking their make-up off, and waited with growing excitement for the curtain to go up.

It was more exciting than I imagined it would be. I have never seen such marvelous hands as Mei Lan Fang's, nor such grace and beauty as his dancing, nor such exotic poignancy as his acting. Mr. Kumphu King, art connoisseur, has arranged a tea at his house, where Ted can have a long talk with Mei Lan Fang. Kumphu King speaks perfect English, and I am sure they will have a splendid time.

*November 10.* Today the interview with Ted and Mei Lan Fang to which I was invited as far as the courtyard. There Mary Ferguson entertained me by discussing Chinese gardens, while Ted and Kumphu King and Mei Lan Fang went off into another room and over many cups of tea had their interview. Later Mei Lan Fang generously presented me with two of his own dancing costumes.

Not one moment to write in Peking. It was all wonderful and exciting and splendid. We cannot realize that we were there for three days, and that we played to distinguished audiences, ministers and their ladies, and many wealthy Chinese and Japanese. That we saw the Temple of Heaven and Mei Lan Fang, and that we bought some lovely Chinese costumes for our ballet with the help of Mary Ferguson, and some scrolls that are things of beauty—and met many charming and gracious people—well, it passed, as all this life will pass, like a lovely dream.

My circumstance and destiny have caused me to live a theatrical life—a life of art and of the stage, but underneath the confusion, success, and failure of a full life I have often wondered, and am now wondering, what influence this experience has had upon my inner consciousness, and upon the inner consciousness of any stage person. The thing that continually comes to my mind is that during the hours when I am dancing, when I am in any way expressing beauty, I am in a more harmonious state of being than at any other time, for the reason that my entire organism is living under and acting from the idea of beauty that governs it in those hours. The anxious, commonplace moods of

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ordinary living are excluded. I move under the will or direction of a higher and different kind of vibration. The opinions, ideas, fears, timidities, and varieties of my other self are held in abeyance, or temporarily destroyed. I find a real escape from the limited sense of life that I ordinarily have. Human relationships are suspended and the sense of age—of being of any particular age—is nonexistent, and all this in direct ratio to the quality of the idea represented by me in those hours. I have always chosen harmonious, mystic, or heroic ideas to dominate my art life. This life has been my religion inasmuch as I have gladly and joyfully shared, worked, sacrificed, endured, and occasionally known a moment of triumph in the interests of this mighty ritual of Beauty.

I feel that I am a link between the invisible world of vision and the visible world of art form, and that it is my duty and my joy to translate with material terms the ideas of my mind, and I am confident that, whether they express it in this manner or not, all true artists feel the same. Always our secret prayer, made directly and inwardly to the God of Beauty, is that he will enlarge our capacity to feel and know, and our strength to endure and give.

In Peking, at the Altar of Heaven, I saw my Theater of Heaven. Instantly I felt that here indeed was an Altar of Heaven and the Universe, opened to the sun and stars and the unseen world, yet defined by a ghostly white balustrade of sandstone and set in a grove of trees. Peace and a curious hushed expectancy lay over the inclosure, and I longed to stay and worship truly in spirit and in grace. I could only make a simple gesture toward the heavens—those heavens that canopy all the nations of the earth, and try to feel for an instant's time the descending rays from the invisible sun of life, pouring into my spirit, while the visible sun bathed my body in the golden warmth of a Chinese autumn day.

Here a vision of white jade as the supreme symbol of Chinese beauty came to me. I have been asking myself what was the core and meaning of the spiritual life of China and what embodiment did its highest aesthetic feeling take, and by effortless logic I have arrived at White Jade and Kuan Yin. . . .

*November* ——— During the night, it seems, we stopped at a place called Weihaiwei, and there our captain put one over on us, and Strok and Buzz and June woke up to find our one hundred and fifty pieces of baggage buried out of sight under tons of loose peanuts. Strok began



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to go mad. He would gladly have decapitated this Chinese merchant who had thought of this excellent way to get his peanuts to Shanghai. He stormed up and down the deck, muttering, "These peanuts—my God—these peanuts. We will never get to Shanghai. They are spoiling my blood." Ted and I finally joined him on his restless paces and told him of miraculous occasions in the States when we had been faced by some such catastrophic delay, but had always managed to ring up the curtain.

*Shanghai, November 17.* Well, we did not arrive until we ourselves as well as Strok were in a panic. We were to arrive here on the sixteenth; instead, we did not get in until seven o'clock on the evening of the seventeenth. Our curtain could not go up until ten o'clock. While the company was making up, Ted made a curtain speech, one of our old tricks to hold an audience. They were marvelously good-natured, and sent back word that they would willingly wait until midnight.

The show was ragged, but the reception was enthusiastic. Doris especially made a hit.

*November 26.* Today we had lunch with Dr. Annie Fearn, and she invited the whole company to a Thanksgiving Dinner where we are to meet Princess Der Ling. From the luncheon we go to the Jade Tree Studio and have pictures taken in their lovely circle set in the garden wall.

*Hong Kong, December 1.* An enchanting harbor, with the lights of the city going up a hill, twinkling like stars and reflected in the black bay beneath our feet. . . . Now our faces are turned toward Singapore.

*Singapore, December 11.* Today Pearl and I go on a 'rikisha expedition to the pet shops. Unbelievably fascinating little Chinese stores, hung within an inch of their capacity with a hundred varieties of birds and parrots. This is an especially evil-smelling, dark, noisy little shop, presided over by a fat Chinese who waddles about in carpet slippers, trying in pidgeon English to sell us various birds. Suddenly, hearing an especially ingratiating little voice, I look up into a pair of beady black eyes in a white head which is dipping down from a perch to make a grab at my hat. I look and he seems so friendly that I put out my finger and he immediately closes around it with his sharp little

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claws. He makes a funny, tugging movement with his head and I turn to Pearl and say, "I've found him." I called him Dada.

*December 13. On a roof garden, in a mist, watching the little Malay dancers.* There are four musicians—one has a Burmese gong, one a large drum which she beats with little sticks, one a violin, and one seems to be "resting."

The girls simply walk to each other and away from each other, singing at intervals in a high, flat voice. "Chinese" voices. There is a little sag or syncopation. They have bells on their ankles.

*Rangoon, Burma, December 22.* At last Kipling and the "whackin' cheroot." I am sitting on the edge of my bunk, still on the ship, *Egra*, which brought us here from Singapore. It is now only about 11 A.M. and is yet dark with dim lights just showing through the porthole over Rangoon and the Shwé Dagon—Ted spied it first as we leaned out of the porthole in our pajamas.

*December 31.* "Nothing is too good to be true." A faint but real feeling of "return" to my old consciousness of power and beauty seems to have come back to me here. I have so far on this trip not had a vestige of it. But here in Rangoon, to me the threshold of India, I feel a little inspiration, a little thrill, and enthusiasm, to rise again and do.

Pearl is my one spiritual strengthener. I have told her of the feeling that I had, that I should have money to spend while I am here, that I can do something beautiful and interesting again, and she supports me. I am so grateful for her.

*On the outskirts of Rangoon.* This is an American Coney Island! All around, human skeletons, merry-go-rounds, side shows, and the usual clatter and bang of a county fair. We have come to see our first Pwé dancer, that entirely Burmese entertainer.

In the midst of the grounds is set a boxing ring, on a highish platform lighted by two very bold electric lights. The boxing match is over. Now at the back of the stage comes the orchestra, consisting of drums and flutes. Near by sits the dancers' family. Some women and a child or two, smoking cheroots peacefully and waiting with encouraging interest for the little dancers.

In a perfect passion of energy a slender little Burmese dancer, who of course is also a singer, sprang onto the stage. She had her own orchestra and she began at once on a delightful little risqué song.

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She is pretty as a picture, about eighteen, with a flat, mischievous, Mongolian face. She is chic and devilish as a French soubrette. She whirls, kneeling, holding the fan behind her.

During the intervals she performed a number of these difficult, technical stunts of squatting on her heels one moment, leaping straight up into the air while pushing her feet to the side and back again, and then performing some curious little backward turns.

She had just begun the second stanza of her song when a half-drunken British sailor from somewhere in the audience took a ten-rupee note, rolled it in his palms, and threw it onto the stage at her feet. She swooped down with greedy little fingers and picked it up without losing a beat, as of one very accustomed to doing this. But our British sailor had other ideas, and he bawled out to the vast amusement of the crowd, "I say, sister, I just give you a ten-rupee note. What do I get for it?" We all waited to hear her reply. She held up a measure of her song, just long enough to hiss out, "You get a receipt."

*Christmas Day. By an open window in our rooms at the Royal Hotel.* It is morning; our little early tea has not yet come. I am sitting between the shuttered windows listening to the morning sounds of this truly Oriental city. Great trees come up to the ledge of my window and the crows are flying about, cawing to each other and then hiding themselves for a moment in the foliage. These crows are a strange brood. They are everywhere cawing and cooing with a curious, vibrant noise, flying against the sky in great black whirls and streaks; and then at sundown they disappear—whether to leave the city or whether, like the watchman and the beggars below, to sleep in the hills, we do not know . . . they seem a strange symbol of something.

I can't help thinking of those thousands at night who lie stretched out on the streets to sleep anywhere and anyhow—and the gold-leafed pagoda and the bazaars—and the Buddhist priests! Doubtless God is in his heaven, and that is a good, safe place for God to be! But what about his creatures?

Junie has found a mangy little tree and some equally mangy tinsel balls and a cardboard angel to put on top, and presently we shall all meet downstairs and say Merry Christmas to one another. But I know that we won't be able to keep from smiling as we say it—with the smell of curry and incense in the air and fly-catching lizards running over the white walls of our room!

*Sunday morning, at the house of the Hadji. Another Pwé! We are in mixed company; a "badman" for a host, at least one whose father*

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was a bad man—a little matter of murder and opium smuggling. The son is spending all his ill-gotten gains giving his friends a "good time" and a glimpse of Burmese dancing in this barn of a palace.

We are now seated in a large upper room of the house. Buzz ■ setting up his moving-picture camera; we are all in chairs around this cool, whitewashed, high-ceilinged room, on a rug. At one end of this huge room are the musicians.

The orchestra is doing an overture—shrieking—with the little flute sending out piercing, high notes, and all the cymbals clashing.

They are about to begin with a salaam—a prayer—I understand.

Two comedians have just put on their *lungis*. They are talking to each other—now one of the little dancers, after much fussing with her make-up, has come out of the group. Buzz is grinding. They laugh at our applause—the Burmese never applaud.

Now an East Indian is singing. He is fat and jolly and sings with gusto.

Well, this Pwé is over—the little people are packing up their orchestra. The dancers are taking off their headdresses and putting away their jewelry in boxes, and I am wondering how I can translate all this into American terms.

Just now the group moves out—salaaming with little soft brown hands and smiles. Little business girls, these children. . . .

*January 1, 1926.* Underneath these exciting days is running the thread of Ted's and my personal life. Hours of continued deep companionship, other hours of dissonance.

Very terrible and very real is the fact that to the one I love best I bring unrest and insecurity and pain, when I would bring joy and help and peace. What is my place—my being? Is marriage a right state for me? I honestly do not know what is right to do. Not merely in regard to the contracting elements of marriage but to the deeper significances of love. Love should be a unity—a whole—a perfect thing, and above time and space if it is anything. But in our life, lived in time and space, where all is in segments, where we are unevenly developed, can the manifestation of love be perfect?

I can and should do many things. A negative and repetitious life is not my life. It may be another's but it is not mine. I was sent to serve, with all the faithfulness and devotion that I am capable of, visions and ideas of creative truth and beauty that are poured into my consciousness.

Today at sunset three people stood near a Buddhist ruin on a slight knoll silhouetted against the deep orange glow of the sun. In a hollow,

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half buried in tropical trees, was a little monastery which was sending forth a soft enchantment of sound. Monks were chanting their evening litany; the moment was fraught with a delicate emotional beauty, for the other man, who was a very real person and connected with the government of Burma, had brought us out here to see and to hear just this hour. He and I stood a little apart from Ted, aware of those delicate nuances which are sometimes the prelude of love and sometimes but a passing harmony of temperament. He seemed, for a moment, to focus the mysteries which I had so long sensed in this ancient East. Ted was restlessly moving about, anxious to get away, aware of my response to this man and of his to me, and a secret inner battle between Ted and me was beginning once more. But he knows that my wandering days began long ago.

*January 1, 1926.* Our friends, the Paw Tuns, those blessed people who have done so much to make this marvelous Rangoon accessible to us, have again done the impossible. It seems that Po Sein is the greatest dancer of Burma, the kind who is fabulously wealthy, and dances only for the Prince of Wales or the Duke of Connaught. He is in mourning for a favorite wife; and all the British wirepulling could not get him to see us. But Maung Paw Tun, a native of Burma, and deputy-president of the Legislative Council of Burma, and husband of a charming American woman, has been able to do the trick. Ted was taken out to Po Sein's home, saw his entire ballet, and got some private lessons on the fascinating and difficult technique of Burmese dancing. He has also persuaded Po Sein to come and see our show.

*January 3.* Po Sein has seen our performances twice, and says that, except for his own, mine are the most marvelous hands in the world. He has arranged to have a costume made for me under his direction, as a present. Really, these Oriental dancers are unbelievably gracious and generous in their help.

*January 5.* Last night at the theater, with a certain amount of courage and the chief of police resplendent in evening dress standing in the wings for protection, I put on my first *Nautch*. Up until now I have been very shy of bringing coals to Newcastle.

We had come to the end of our present repertory. The manager said we could stay two or three nights more if we had some new things. So Pearl and I, with Ted and Buzz standing on the side lines holding their breath, got out the black and gold sari and the *Palace*

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*Nautch.* The chief of police had attended our performances for reasons of his own, mostly, I suspect, relating to charming American ballet dancers. But when I told him my apprehensions a few minutes before the curtain went up he said he would be right there if the Oriental equivalent of cabbages came flying through the air. So, with a farewell to everyone, I sailed out on the stage. And lo, the audience rose to it! European audiences had been pretty well used up, so the house consisted almost entirely of Burmans and Indians, which was the best test.

I'm going to put the proof right down here in somebody else's words, to show I'm not exaggerating. This was written by Ahmed Alley, a Burman writing on the *Rangoon Daily News*:

"The Indian *Nautch*, with Miss St. Denis and the Denishawn dancers, was a brilliant presentation, and deserves the fullest credit. The costuming was replete with a wealth of detail, that reminded one of the *Nautch* girls of Lucknow and Agra. Miss Denis is assuredly the greatest Western exponent of Indian dancing that one has yet seen in the East. . . . So often has the Indian dance been confused with the Egyptian movements by Western dancers, who have visited the East, that it is a pleasure to witness the typically Indian dance which is performed by Miss St. Denis and her troupe. . . . A more faithful representation of Indian dancing has probably seldom, if ever, been seen here."

On the rest of this trip I'm going to be a little more difficult to deal with.

*January 6.* Last night, a marvelous experience. The Shwé Dagon Pagoda at midnight under a tropic moon. The long ascent of stairs, under archways, on either side of which are shops, now deserted. As we emerged from the last steps we stood spell-bound. From the center of a huge terrace arises the central shrine, whose piercing golden spire is one of the wonders of the world. On the outer edge of this wide terrace and circling the golden shrine are little pagodas for holding a variety of the images of Buddha, some in bronze, some in translucent alabaster, all having candles and flowers, left by the pilgrims of the day, faded and drooping on the altars. Someone had told us that at midnight we should not be bothered with a guide, so here we stood. A few motionless beggars are in the shadows, and stray dogs are sniffing about the candle droppings on the marble floors. On one side towers a great tree, purporting to be a slip of the original bodhi tree, through

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which the moon is shining, making patterns on the marble terrace; and then we all stop and listen.

The night wind, passing softly over the spires, is causing hundreds of little bells to tinkle in a heavenly harmony of delicate sound. We dispersed a little, each one going to some shrine that attracted his attention. Pretty soon I found myself alone in front of a small pagoda where a few guttering candles still light up the face of the image. As I stood silently contemplating the image, feeling eerily a thousand overtones provoked by this calm, seated alabaster image of the Buddha, I became aware of someone standing slightly to the left of the shrine in the shadow. A Chinese pilgrim, tall, with slender brown hands and a scholarly, impressive face. He had come thousands of miles to this image he was adoring. His hands were softly rubbing the rosary. Presently to my astonished eyes he took a slight step forward, and sank into a posture of complete prostration. He let his head rest a moment on his crossed wrists, and then, with the most beautiful gesture of hands that I have seen, he uncurled them like dried lotus petals, like delicate organs of the receiving soul. He waited, and these hands seemed, as they curled again, to take into themselves some blessing, from the image; and then I was guilty of a very stupid thing. I took a few pennies out of my purse and laid them gently on the little mat where he had kneeled, and started to walk away. He made an arresting motion with his hand, stooped down with great dignity, and held out the pennies to me, and for one brief moment looked into my eyes and smiled.

*Calcutta, January 7.* At last we are in India. I can't realize it. I am now in the old Grand Hotel. As I sense the teeming streets in the hot sunshine outside there comes back to me Paramananda's day at the school when he chanted in Sanskrit for us, and taught us our first lesson in patience. India, I know, will reveal itself; but slowly—very slowly.

Rangoon, with its golden Temple and the little monastery on a hill, is now a memory! . . . Rangoon, of the spices in the evening breeze, and the cawing crows flying black against the sunset, little dancers, rhythmically leaping. . . .

*January 8.* At last I have danced for the first time in India! Memories of the early days of *Radha*, and the boys! The unexpected has happened, and my *Nautch*, I can say with truth, was the most popular number of our program! Next in popularity is Ted's *Adonis*. We had

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it figured out that both the European and the Oriental audiences would like to see various phases of American and European life reflected in our ballets and costumes. The idea that the simplicity of *Adonis*, with no clothes or properties, nothing but the stark beauty of Ted's well-proportioned body in this Greek plastique, would be the favorite of the whole of the Orient is both interesting as well as astonishing. It proves to me that there is an obscure but unconscious ideal of the human body that responds instantly to any manifestation that approaches perfection.

The notices are making us very happy. One said: "Her rendering of the Indian dances is of a very high order. The dance of the black and gold sari is as beautiful as it is enchanting. She has not only caught the Indian spirit, she is experiencing the joy of the spirit; and she is imparting that joy to her spectators."

The audience was apparently very brilliant, with Rabindranath Tagore, the Maharaja of Mohr-Junj, the American Consul General, and government officials.

*January 15.* Today there was a festival on the Ganges and we were taken down to see the millions bathing and bringing their offerings to the river. From the great square in front of our hotel an avenue ran straight to the water. This was about a mile and a half long. And to our astonished eyes it presented the most horrible array of human beings that we had ever witnessed. Here were arrayed men suffering from elephantiasis, leprosy, twisted and disjointed limbs, and hundreds of other maladies of the Orient. They were arranged in some semblance of order on both sides of this wide avenue. Each man (there were very few women) sat upon a filthy bit of rug or matting, about ten feet apart, lining the way with their horrible, tragic bodies while the pilgrims made their way between them to the river. When possible they held out their skinny hands for a picc, something less than a farthing; and inevitably the Indian woman pilgrim would stop a moment, and from the corner of her white sari would extract a tiny coin, and drop it into the hand of some poor wretch for whom she felt some particular sympathy.

By the time we had reached the river I was so depressed and so heartsick that the further interest of seeing two or three million bathers in the river made little impression on my mind.

When about noon we arrived back at the hotel I sat for an hour without moving; for it seemed to me, in spite of all I could summon up of spiritual realization, and the knowledge that this was in the very highest analysis but a horrid dream, that God had forsaken this



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world, and nothing remained but horrible, broken bodies, and piteous eyes.

If twenty years before I had seen any such sight there would have been no *Radha*, and perhaps no career.

*January 18.* Today our good friend, Mr. Jenkins, secretary to the Governor General, has sleuthed down a couple of Nautch girls. It seems there are still some in captivity; but as none of them have been visible to the naked eye, and we have all come seven thousand miles ■ see them, we think it is time we got a glimpse of one.

After as much diplomacy as would have settled a war our friend eventually tracked down what my brother irreverently referred to afterwards as "a stringy old pullet," of sixty or more, reputed to be the greatest dancer in India. She received us in a French salon with crystal chandeliers, and a butler serving tea. She was dressed in a pure white sari, a Parisian importation trimmed with native edging; and she was wearing probably, at the least, fifty thousand dollars' worth of jewels. She looked very surprised when we timidly intimated that we had come not to enjoy her Western hospitality, but to see her dance.

After a delay of half an hour a native orchestra was secured and began to tune up. Then something did begin to happen! She stood in the middle of the floor, crossed her right foot over her left, extended her arms shoulder high, and began the first chapter of a love story with her eyebrows. She did not move the rest of her body for nearly five minutes.

It was all a mystery to us, but fascinating. Then, as we gazed at her in rapt attention, we fascinatedly watched those flying black swallows—her brows—carrying out in some interior rhythm the story of pursuit, retreat, and capture from the immortal *Radha* and *Krishna* love theme. Then dozens of little bells on her feet began a perfect cascade of sound as she did turns and half turns. Her whole body became an exclamation point to climax the preceding part of her tale, which she had been telling with her brows. We were at last seeing the superb technique of an Indian Nautch dancer, one of the few survivors of a great dancing tradition.

*January 19.* Tonight our two Nautch dancers came to the show and came backstage, apparently pleased with our performance.

*Days later.* My *Nautch* and *Black and Gold Sari* continue ■ be such a riot that when people ask me how the Indians like my dancing

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I throw them Doris' opinion of it. She said tonight, quite without resentment, "Well, it's plain to be seen what kind of a program the Denishawns have to give in India. First Miss Ruth does four *Black and Gold Saris*. Then she rests a while, and then does at least six *Nautches*. After that we all go home!"

*January 21.* We are having tea at the Consul General's charming home. Here are English women, Indian Princes, the Bishop of Calcutta, and most interesting of all, a unique personality, Josephine McLeod. After we had been introduced she took Ted and me off into a corner and whispered, "Don't spend too much time on all this. You want to see India. I can show it to you. I'll show you something authentic. First a personality, and second a place. The personality is Boshi Sen, young, radiant, a scientist, a mystic, who will show you many things. The place is the Ramakrishna Mission at Belur." Josephine McLeod, Tantine, as she is called by her countless friends, is a rare person. It will never be known how many people she has stimulated and loved and helped.

*January 25.* Two days ago that remarkable Boshi Sen took Ted to Belur, and yesterday I went. We took a ferryboat, leaving Calcutta in the late afternoon—Ted and I and Tantine. We sailed perhaps half an hour; and in the distance, through the haze of the evening, appeared something like three white pearls lifting themselves above the mists. Tantine, seeing our faces gazing in admiration and wonder, says quietly, "Yes, this is the way you should see it. That is Belur. That is where those saints Vivikananda and Ramakrishna are buried. Here is the place where peace reigns; and I know that you will find beauty."

How many years ago was it when someone put into my hands a little book called *My Master*, which was a brief autobiography of Ramakrishna? My soul had fed on that picture of this god-intoxicated man, whose spirit has penetrated to the far ends of the earth! And now, after all these years, I was coming to the tomb of Ramakrishna, and to the place where his monks meditate and send forth their spiritual beauty to the rest of the world.

Tantine led the way off the ferryboat, and up a little lane to the monastery. Peace reigns in the gardens—the white tombs are like some architecture in a dream; sacred cows wander over the grounds; there is the river flowing by, carrying its freshness from the Himalayas, its color from the soil, with a little beach where I made my deep obeisance to the setting sun. Arches frame an Indian sky. Men and women come and go softly in colored draperies, bringing flowers. Five hundred are

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being fed in the courtyard of the monastery—yellow-robed monks serving. . . . A day of Pilgrimage.

Tantine bids us sit down while she goes to her own special room to bring us a surprise. She unfolds a beautiful, pure crystal image of Ramakrishna done by Lalique of Paris. She sets it directly in the center of a dark, gleaming table, and the afternoon sun lights it like a living thing; and then, oh joy! She wraps it and puts it in our hands, a present from her and this place of peace. Ted and I are in a daze. Here is the heart of spiritual India subtly pulsing around us, and this gracious American woman is the bridge and door opener for these artists from home.

*January ——— On train going to Bombay.* Ted and I have been trying to sleep in the little train compartment while flying over the moonlit plains of India. The question of building Denishawn House is being discussed. For some reason deep down in me, which I cannot at the moment give good reasons for, I do not want it built. As usual, Ted has all the sensible, workable reasons on his side. I am forced to see that we are indeed living "all over the map," with furniture being stored, studios being rented, sewing rooms and offices being paid for; and that the combined rent is something appalling. How much better, indeed, to be paying on a building which we owned, and where we could have the convenience and comfort and joy of our own home.

We discussed and argued, and there were some hysterics; mostly on my part, though I believe in this case a little on his as well. Then, when we finally tired each other out I got back into my little lower narrow bunk of a bed and lay there thinking after the lights were out. I cannot overcome my instinct that this is wrong; but if it leads to a *real* partnership I will be content.

*Bombay, January 30.* Today I was vividly taken back to a day long ago in the Bhungara shop in New York in the days of *Radha*. For we went to pay a short visit ■ the Gackwar of Baroda. He had been to the theater the night before and sat with his staff in a box. I sent him an informal note, in answer to which he invited Ted and me ■ pay him a little visit in his Bombay residence.

He received us most cordially and expressed intelligent and broad appreciation of our performance and pleasure that such an enterprise could be managed! He was kind enough to speak of the good taste of

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my Nautch costume. In closing he said he hoped to be able to arrange to have us come to Baroda in the spring.

*February 9.* I am now seated on a rock in the caves of Elephanta. Before me is the Trimurti, that marvelous conception of the godhead, expressed in these three noble faces of Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu. No time to write—only to feel.

*Quetta, Baluchistan, February 24. Staryon Hotel.* We are near the wild mountains of Afghanistan. We play tonight to a cantonment of British soldiers.

*Nedous Hotel. Monday morning, March 10.* I am sitting under a tree in the courtyard of the hotel, waiting for Buzz to come with the car for us all: Doris and Mother Humphrey and Buzz and I are to go to Amritsar.

*Amritsar.* We have seen the golden temple, floating on the waters. This is the stronghold of the Sikhs. We are allowed to go over a kind of causeway, which leads to a wonderful apartment, where some priests are reading perpetually from their holy books. I understand they relieve each other at certain hours, so that its message is continuously intoned.

*Cawnpore, March 10.* We are seated in a cool, rather dark room in our bungalow, waiting. Presently, along the corridor, comes the conjurer we have summoned. He carries his little bag of tricks, in the familiar handkerchief. His clothes are nondescript, as always, and he has the soft, ingratiating manner of the street performer. He is silhouetted for a moment in the doorway, and then comes forward and makes a deep salaam. To our amazement, he says he was in the old Thompson and Dundie performances at Coney Island! He must, then, have been in that troupe of jugglers and snake charmers who started me off on this wild career of Indian dancing. We chat about old days; and then he starts to work.

I had never seen the mango trick. It has been described over and over again, but it still seems astounding that from a dirty white handkerchief, a little hourglass drum with its two flappers (which make a terrible rattle!), and a little pot, over which at mysterious intervals a handkerchief is thrown, should grow this mango tree of considerable

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proportions, with shiny green living leaves. We gaze at it, and wonder; and are just where we started from.

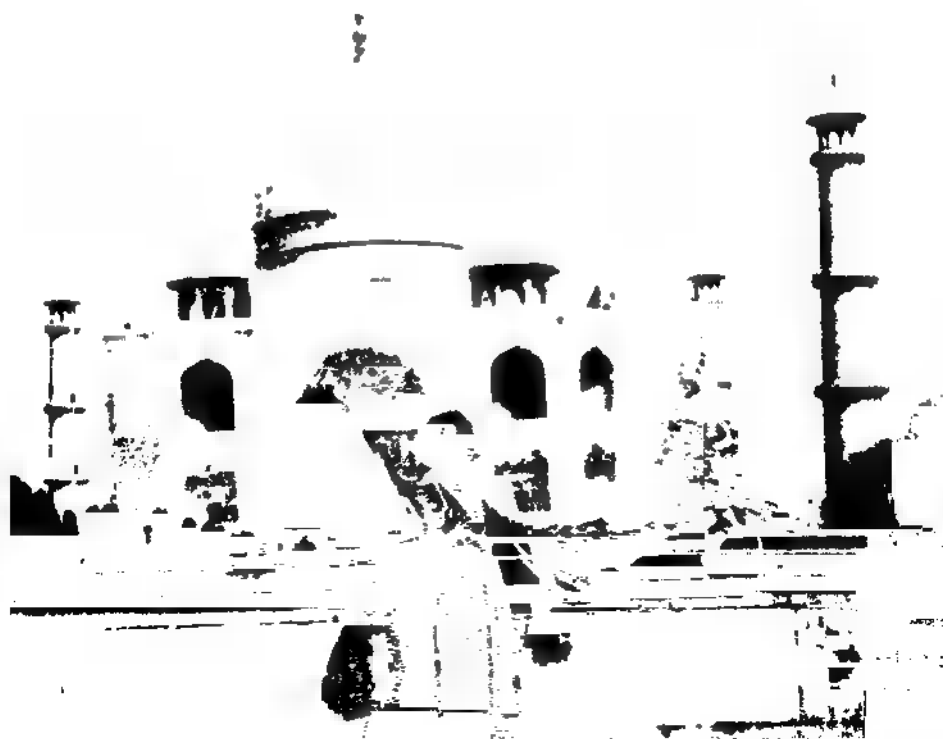
*March 11.* Today we spent in the bazaars, which as usual had some things that no other bazaars have had. We bought whole dresses for twenty rupees, and much braid. Pearl's a wonder: she practices a kind of incantation with these merchants. She takes up the piece of cloth or braid or jewel that she wants and upon asking the price immediately offers from a quarter to a third of the price asked. This price she keeps on repeating in varying tones, till the merchant falls under a kind of hypnosis, and usually gives in!

*Agra, March 16.* At last the Taj. It is "the early, pearly morning" of the "Song of Golgavind." Before dawn we entered a gate silhouetted against the green-gray sky of sunrise. We woke the keeper of the gates, and entered, and it is before us, waiting for the sun. All birds are waking and chattering. Doves are cooing from a distant tree. The cypresses are doubled in the still water and, behold!—there in the mist is the Taj Mahal.

It is five o'clock. Dearest and I stood at that dawn hour near the great entrance gate, gazing, and wept in each other's arms. Later, Buzz and the company came, and we strolled along the cypress walks toward the Tomb. And then occurred a little incident which I will never forget. Suddenly, in the silence of the exquisite dome, I sang a little song. It was as though something with my voice had gone upwards like a spiral into the infinite distances of another world. It was one of the rare occasions when I saw tears in Buzz's eyes. He had sensed the pathos of the love that built this tomb; and—who knows?—perhaps some inner sadness, some inner strange mystical beauty moved him to a release of dreams in this marvelous place that will never come again in this life. I turned away weeping; and when I came back a moment later Buzz could not speak. We merely looked at each other.

*Delhi, March 16.* Future plans go forward. A plan for the Van Cortlandt lots: to build at last on the lots, so that Ted and I can have a center, semiartistic, semidomestic. I think it best that we have two studios, both for us, if we want to use them; and one, or even two, to rent, ■ we are traveling.

The Viceroy's staff sent me a large basket of roses. The entire staff





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■ coming to the performance. . . . We have been in India now for three months, and everywhere it has been sold-out houses.

*Benares, March 29.* It is midnight, and Buzz and Pearl and I are on the roof of a little houseboat on the Ganges. We are going to watch the sleeping city until we fall asleep, and we shall see Benares at sunrise—this great "City of the Gods." I am writing this by the light of the moon.

It is very still, and yet there are a thousand noises. Bells are being rung in the temples that tower over the ghats; dogs are barking; strange birds are calling sleepily in the ancient hills that hang protectingly over the temples and the palaces that line the river. Here and there are the red blossoms of the burning ghats and the white, shrouded bodies of the dead—those bodies no longer of service in this incarnation. They flame intermittently against the black battlements. Holy Mother Ganges! An especially loud, yet silvery gong is sounding from a temple shrouded in shadows. Farther, there is the sound of cymbals and high, rhythmic singing. On our side, near us, frogs are croaking; and there is the soft lap of the river against the boat side. A little breeze is cooling the night air. Behind me, as I write, stretches a space of white sand like that of Egypt; and farther down is a small tent, and some camels. I saw them from the city side yesterday. Buzz and Pearl have drifted off in cool, refreshing sleep, and I am alone—with the moon and this strange, ancient city of the gods.

So much of the surfaces in India (to our Western eyes) are hideous beyond belief; but there the law of compensation works ceaselessly. For I am drawn not to what my senses take in, but to what my spirit intuitively feels is existing here in the very air and atmosphere of this holy city.

*Dawn.* We have awakened, and are still lying on our bed rolls, gazing at the pageant of the farther shore. Streams of women, like colored ants in their soft saris, carrying on their heads the brass and copper lotas, are moving swiftly along the steps of the ghats. A full pale moon, that has been watching all night, is sinking slowly in the West. The sky is a misty violet; flutes are beginning, and the drums and voices, like the sound of water, come floating over to us with the brisk, cool morning breeze.

*Later.* Standing for a moment by the Buddhist ruins near Sarnath, outside of Benares, where Buddha first preached, I am again aware



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of hovering forces. The guide tells us that for the first two hundred years after Buddha's death there were no images; and suddenly I am able to wipe out of my mind all the temples and shrines and gorgeous vestments and rituals which have accumulated around this wonderful being in the succeeding years; and I seem to be standing by his quiet side, realizing ■ some faint degree his sexless, selfless realization of the infinite. I feel that I touch the very presence of this compassionate and beautiful soul, and I am content.

*Bombay.* We are on the platform of the big station. On the way to our compartment, I see a little group of Europeans hovering for just a moment around an object on the platform. Buzz, who was among this group, says in answer to my questioning look: "You better keep away, Sis. You won't like it." He goes swiftly about his business with the baggage; and my curiosity gets the better of me. There is a dead Hindu lying stretched on the platform; and the passing crowd of natives are as oblivious of this poor creature as though he were a dog. Life, birth, death seem to mean so little to them! They have achieved the ultimate in self-forgetfulness, and have lost the contact with what we call reality. India today, however, is rising from its meditations to take its place objectively, politically, and socially. What will it lose in the process?

*April 17.* This afternoon an interesting and amusing hour with Mme. Sarojini Naidu, that Indian poetess and, paradoxical as it sounds, right-hand man of Gandhi in his multitudinous labors for the freeing of India. I had read some of her enchanting poetry, written when she was quite young; and now here she is—a mature, but still very beautiful, woman, with the affairs of statehood and political dilemmas thronging her mind. By some funny twist of mood I am hotly defending the influence and power of Gandhi, and she—both of us aware of the humor of the situation—is defending Ford, with his tractors, as the savior of India.

*April 23.* This afternoon the Comas are coming to take us to see a beggars' camp of their Parsee community, which so well cares for the unfortunate of their own sect. These hospitable and kindly people came into our lives in America. They are inveterate travelers, and go everywhere and see everything. Their home city is Poona, but we had to meet them here in Bombay. A more charming, internationally

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minded couple it would be difficult to find. They are doing everything in their power to acquaint us with Bombay.

*The next night.* An amazing scene: His Royal, Supreme, Exalted Highness, the Nizam of Hyderabad, wearing an old, dusty linen coat, a two days' beard, and a pair of tan tennis shoes, is here again, and insists upon viewing our show from backstage. So right behind Stan, who unperturbedly goes on his way lighting the show and pulling the curtain, sits his Eminence—dodging Stan's elbow, and worrying a little about his wives, who are seated in a boxlike arrangement on the stage also, with a gauze screen in front of their faces, looking excitedly through a slit made in our curtains. The various and sundry progeny of the said wives and the said Nizam are seated in a row right in front of Buzz, who is running the other spot, besides playing a part, and seeing to things generally. A most interesting evening!

All we could find for the Nizam to sit on was an old kitchen chair; and the stage being so small, it has had to be put directly under Stan's lights—there being no other way to dispose of him. After the first ballet Stan hunts up Ted and says in a mutter, "Who is this guy getting in the way of my lights?" And Ted says, "He's the richest man in the world."

At the conclusion of the performance word came to my dressing room that the Nizam wished to thank me and my company for the performances he had witnessed. I, all aflutter, got on my loveliest dressing gown, his aide escorting me up the dressing-room steps, with the company sneaking along behind to be in at the kill. Visions of emeralds and diamonds, necklaces and eardrops, as tokens of his appreciation, floated before my excited gaze as I stepped (I hope respectfully) onto the stage where His Highness stood leaning on his cane. As I approached him, one of his attachés stepped forward and said, "His Serene Highness wishes to thank you for the delightful hours he has spent with you and your company, and wishes me to present you with a book of his poems."

*Madras.* Our last performance in India. The vast pageant which is India has unrolled itself city by city, plain by plain, with temples and palaces, bazaars and bathing ghats. Yet to me it seems a huge multi-colored screen, behind which there was a whole living world of values which would take years to penetrate, even superficially. Yet that was the India I had come to find.

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But I could not arrest this hectic existence, even for a day, to touch that Reality which even now exists behind these veils of time.

*Later.* It is hot noontime, and we are just off the train which has stopped for a day to let us see this strange Temple of Madura. Our guide says it will take three hours just to glance through the various courtyards, lotus tanks, and elephant quarters of the temple.

First we stand and look up at these monstrous and incredible figures carved over every inch of these towering gateways. Then we look down a long corridor where slow, white figures are perpetually moving—a few women pilgrims, half-clad men from the country, and many, many priests, with their strange stare and their caste marks.

So we leave the hot sunshine, and move slowly inward; and as we do this we literally leave the twentieth century, and become an alien, and yet intermingled, part of a whole city within these strange walls—a city of religion, where the gods and the doings of the gods are all that men think of—where time does not exist.

I do not know how old Madura is: it may be two thousand years; it may be less. But we are at once caught in the orbits of a mentality that refuses to take account of the earth's turnings, of the clocks of the world. They mean nothing.

Here are little bazaars, around the outer courts. I buy a wooden elephant, costing a rupee, which is the most precious thing I have bought in India. Now we begin to penetrate deeper and deeper into the maze of rooms, where there are strange, exotic images. A worshiper has brought marigolds to add to the rotting heap at the foot of a god who seems to be dancing in an ecstatic rage. It is dark, and only the candles throw grotesque shadows everywhere. Hovering incense, centuries old, assaults our nostrils. Burning butter, the scent of decayed flowers, and a faint dust raised by the feet of the countless pilgrims make us almost sick; and yet our fascination draws us on.

Vaguely, we seem to be remembering that there was a world somewhere—America, England, France. Where are they? Here are all the strange manifestations of the human spirit, vitalized and devitalized human bodies, and the bodies of animals. Elephants parading solemnly through corridors, and disappearing in the distance. Through an archway, for a moment, we see a lily tank of blue lotuses scintillating in the sunshine; and now that fades. We go underground, where only a few pilgrims penetrate; and here is a kind of awful silence. And now time does seem to be dead.

We can scarcely breathe, and yet are aware of vibrant forces, which

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surround us and animate the fanaticism of these tall, commanding priests. What are the visions and the dreams of this man, sitting motionless before a towering image, half lighted by candles which shine weirdly before another image? Of what is he thinking? Does he know any life but this, and are the gods more real to him than this dungeon temple? Our guide says very little. He thinks it hopeless to explain to us. He is wise. All we can do is to let our intuition function. Intellectually, it is meaningless—horrible—grotesque. And yet, there are meanings.

After two hours we again emerge into the blinding sunlight. Time catches our feet; and we move with it, leaving behind a strange aspect of eternity.

*On the boat plying from India to Ceylon. Farewell, India! When and how shall I see you again?*

*Kandy, Ceylon, May, 1926. On a balcony overlooking the lake. It is early evening, and a misty moon hangs over the dark waters and the lovely hills that line the ancient walks. Across the lake a procession is moving slowly. Tomorrow is Buddha's birthday, a great festival. We are fortunate to be here; for there are groups of pilgrims walking leisurely, with chanting and drums and flutes; and colored fire is reflected in the black mirror of the lake. An image, which I cannot see from here, is being carried on the shoulders of priests.*

I wonder if in my desire always to impersonate Truth I haven't done with the body exactly what these ancients have done with their arts.

They personalized elements, qualities, and quantities into gods, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and what not. They felt the necessity for projecting the elements of their realizations into tangible form, such as temples and images and symbols. It came over me at Sarnath, the deer park outside of Benares, where Buddha first began to preach his metaphysical doctrines, how impossible it is for us humans not to have an objective image of some kind, whether it is manifested as person, book, or place. Seemingly, the mind cannot hold merely a disembodied concept long enough for purposes of study, contemplation, and growth.

*Saturday night. Late.* I stood out on my little back veranda and watched the stars. The courtyard was silent, the air cool and sweet, and my own spirit quiet. I breathed deeply and rhythmically; and I

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seemed to feel a strange relationship with the night, the stars, the universe by that simple inward gesture of controlling my breath.

The old Indian teaching came back to me. I felt steadied and harmonious to myself and to the distant worlds. Presently I thought of the Altar of Heaven at Peking, and my dance of White Jade. To worship the elements—of earth, air, fire, water. That understanding and adoring of the beauty and utility of the cosmic elements out of which is fashioned such an exquisite thing as an image of jade!

*Java, July 27.* We were met as soon as we arrived by Mr. Walter, the secretary of the Kunst Kring, that very civilized association formed for the purpose of welcoming the foreign artists.

We are on the way to my first volcano. It is called Bromo. It is four o'clock in the morning, and I am sitting on a little bench in a shack—a kind of halfway station where we are provided with ponies, on whose altogether inadequate backs we are supposed to make the descent into the floor of a huge crater, which is extinct; and then up the sides of a smaller one, which is supposed to be alive. It is cold, and the hotel where we stayed overnight, high up in the mountains, has sent the boys with tea, which we gratefully imbibe. Now the ponies are gathering; and Strok, who has come along with us, is muttering at having got up at this hour. Ted and I are chuckling, and everyone is busy getting into the saddles.

*Later.* In khaki pants and high boots, I managed to crawl up with the others and peer into the volcano. It smelled of sulphur, and sounded like the roar of a million subways. We almost left Strok at the foot of the steps. He was panting, and swearing that he would not walk another step. Buzz and Ted basely deserted me to wheedle him into making the final effort. When we all finally stood at the rim of the crater, only about ten feet wide, and peered gingerly into its growling depths, Strok said—and we laughed so we nearly fell into the crater—"We have come two days, and it cost me fifty dollars; and this is what I get!"

*Djokja, August. Palace of the Sultan.* We are witnessing a Weyang, that marvelous drama which is Hindu in origin, containing the stories from the Mahabharata, and which even the present Mohammedan ruler allows ■ be performed every three years. Hundreds of men and boys in the cast are dressed in incredibly beautiful costumes; and the great orchestra of gongs faces us as we sit under the silver pavilion. The

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Sultan and his many lovely wives are sitting to the left of us. Each actor comes and bows to him before he takes his place in the action of the play.

There is an interlude of much talk by the two main giants: two mythological creatures in this drama. We have now changed seats and are under the Royal Roof. Behind the Sultan are rows of the Royal Princesses, in the brown and white typical batik skirts, but with Chinese blue jackets, and highly ornate diamond earrings in their ears and many rings on their slender fingers. Attendants who bring them cooling drinks do so on their knees, never rising until they have left the royal presences. The girls are a pale, lovely yellow-brown, with shining black hair done in a double knot low on the neck, and set with round diamond ornaments, and close-packed flowers.

The big giant is still talking, surrounded by a ballet of forty-five or fifty. The young men characters are so elegant and slender! Oh, oh! now come huge paper animals—elephants and bulls. I see them through the pillars of the pavilion, where they are being made ready to enter.

The murmur of the children's voices is like the twitter of thousands of birds. The voice of the chief giant is still intoning, and one of the actors seated opposite him is responding by small but distinct gestures of his head and shoulders. The floor is smooth marble. For three hours the speech and music and mime and dancing of this ancient culture passes before our enchanted gaze. The courts are filled with hundreds of women with their babies in their arms. These are the relatives and attendants of the Sultan's palace, and they all live, some seven thousand, in the confines of the palace grounds.

During part of the performance the children have been resting drowsily on their mothers' shoulders. But now the papier-mâché animals enter—great fantastic giraffes and elephants worked by men inside them; and the little heads poke up, the twittering becomes like thousands of sparrows, and the air is filled with laughter and a blend of excited noises as they express their joy at the animals lumbering across the stage.

We slowly file out from this festival of music and color like people waking from a dream.

We are now on the French boat, going to Saigon. Today we arrive, and we plan to go immediately to Pnom-Penh.

*August* ——— We are waiting for the motor to come ■ take us to the King of Cambodia's birthday! At least to his Festival, which is to be given at Pnom-Penh. Mr. Gram, our American consul, has arranged

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for us; and through Ted's marvelous stick-to-it-iveness we shall probably see, after many years, a Siamese ballet.

There are yellow waters, with lights flickering, and strange brilliance on their smooth but moving surfaces. Bales and boxes are being shifted about by sleepy coolies. The brave little Chinese coal carriers, women, in their black smocks, have not yet appeared. The motor is honking. . . . We will have to ride all afternoon; and after the ballet is over, we will have to ride all night to get back to our ship-sailing by 5 A.M. tomorrow.

*Later.* We forded four rivers, dashed through innumerable villages, through forests and over rice fields, and finally arrived at Pnom-Penh. At the end of our long journey we were taken to a little French café for a hasty bite before we repaired to the palace. It was worth all our trouble and expense. I think that in the whole of the East we never had quite that feeling of unreality, of the *Arabian Nights* come true, of being in another world!

The sky was warm, velvet blue. The stars were huge and friendly, and seemed to have come out just then to view this spectacle. There were the high pink walls of the palace, with their exquisite corners. Beautiful carved gates rose against this sky; and as we approached the grounds we heard the fascinating throb of the drums, the shrill notes of some piercing flutes, and—incredible as it seems—Chinese fireworks, shot up in all colors and patterns, spattering themselves against the night.

We were taken through the entrance gateway in a daze. Only Ted and Doris and Charles came with us, as we could afford only the one expensive French car with its native driver for the evening. All that I had hoped for so many years from the East I at last found at this festival. The large compound, covering several acres, was lined on the inside with little booths, like a county fair.

In the center of the compound were the palaces, the silver and gold pavilions where the King lived, and—oh joy! oh joy!—where the ballet took place. All the delicate tracery of the pointed architecture was silhouetted with a silver sheen against the sky; while below, this being the King's birthday, thousands of natives, in all the colors of the rainbow, were milling about in this flare-lighted courtyard. Soft voices of the natives and the call of the drums from the dancing greeted us as we entered, and as the ballet was then on we hurried immediately to our places.

There were several Frenchmen from the legation seated with us in

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a sort of box that had been arranged for foreigners. And, funny as it sounds, there were so many mosquitoes that we were glad to accept woolen blankets to tuck around our knees. I have a vague notion that some wise people had brought mosquito netting. But when the little fairies began to stream out into the pavilion from its far end, where the dressing rooms were, and began with strange little running steps to play with a silver ball, we forgot the mosquitoes and the heat, and even our long ride back.

I remember as I watched the little "Prince and Princess"—she tossing the ball as she ran, and he catching it, with brief excursions back to their separate gold-ornamented benches at either end of the room, while the ballet danced a sort of interlude—that this was the Other-Other Land.

This was the feminine ballet, since these are all girls, in contrast to the masculine ballet of the Weyang in Java, where they were all boys. Here was a light and delicate frivolity. In Java is the more serious and somber enactment of the play of the gods. To the casual eye these little Siamese were only concerned with airy trifles, such as your Burmese gamin is. They look scarcely human, with their little white or yellow faces and their unbelievable arms and hands.

They offered a striking Eastern contrast to the Javanese Weyang dancers, and the Nō dancers of Japan, who seem concerned only with the eternal things.

As with all Oriental festivals, this ballet ran on and on, continuing long after we had to leave. And as we tore through the dark mystery of a Siamese jungle, many times at sixty miles an hour, running over chickens and scattering poor helpless birds who flew into our windshield, there was etched on our minds the memory of these wonderful little figures, patting each other delicately on the cheeks, running swiftly, like low-flying birds, from one end of the pavilion to the other, in and out among the more static members of the ballet, and finally coming to rest in demure, hieratic postures on their gold-tasseled couches.

*Manila. Theater.* Heavens, how swiftly it all goes! This, being an exceedingly old, decrepit firetrap of a place, *would* be called Manila Grand Opera House!

Manila seems insipid and uninteresting, after all we have seen. I don't know what I expected of it, but it disappoints. On Monday night we do another of our Paul Revere rides. We start motoring for eight hours, directly after our last show, to a famous place in the mountains:



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Bagiuo. I will doubtless jot a line when I get there. We are to see the Igorrotes dance, and other interesting sights. This is a trip which has been arranged for us by General Leonard Wood. We have had the privilege of being invited to meet him and some other people at the Malacaña Palace. There was tea, and a precious talk with the General. He is one of the earth's rare souls. In the midst of a thousand duties, he has arranged for us to go to this hill station to see native dancers.

*Bagiuo, September 21. Sitting on a hillside, watching the Igorrotes dance.* Major Reed is stage-managing! Buzz is surrounded by officers and little boys, who are "helping" him change film. It is nine-thirty, and we are lucky in having sunshine, since it is now the rainy season. The dances they will do for us are a wedding dance, in which the boys wear large red handkerchiefs and dark blue sash, and the girls a lighter blue, with a darker blue blouse which has red and white edging. Five drummer boys with brass gongs are to do a group of war dances.

*On the Shanghai Maru, going to Japan.* Good-by China! My last night there I was so sick that I barely got through the performance, cutting *Ishtar* at the end, which I hated to do.

My "realizer" is worn out, and needs a rest! I cannot realize that this long journey to the Orient is nearly over. Before we can catch our breath in Japan we shall be on our ship for home!

*October 28.* Last night we opened again at the Imperial Theater, and again got the red envelope, which means a completely full house—a nice feeling of welcome! We are trying out some of our new Oriental dances, those from Ceylon and Java. They went well.

*October 31.* An enchanting afternoon with Mme. Sawada, the daughter of the Foreign Minister, who showed us through their estate. Autumn leaves and the lake, and she talking most intelligently about modern problems. One of the forward-looking women of Japan, and a distinct personality as well.

Strok has arranged for us to do some of the cities of Japan which have seldom been played by Europeans—some not at all. We are thrilled at the prospect of seeing other spots. I especially, full of Hearn, want to see some of his towns on the Inland Sea. Tokyo has been a great success, with a red envelope every night. . . .

And now our last night of playing in Japan! I am sitting in a little

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room in the Imperial Theater. The music of *Xochitl* floats up from below. We have danced all over this delightful island. We have played so many towns with jaw-breaking names, like Takaradzaku, Nagasaki, and Shimonoseki—and all the rest of them—that Ted says when he gets home he is going to recite them as an after-dinner stunt.

It was a tremendous task. I am glad that it is nearly over. Ted has borne the brunt of the managing and fighting; alas that it should be so, but some of it has been—fighting. And now I do hope that we can translate into our Western terms some of this elusive beauty of the East. Can we gather these visions, these sights and sounds and smells into some comprehensible scenes for our American public at home?

*November 13.* We are going home. This sailing from the dock is touching. Hundreds of our friends have come, and are standing waving *sayonara*—a lump is in all our throats. They have been so unbelievably kind. We spent our last sad-glad night in Japan at Mr. Yamamoto's lovely house. The dock is full, and they are throwing paper streamers up over the deck, and shouting and waving handkerchiefs as we slowly pull out from the wharf. We are hanging over the ship rails, waving our last farewells.

*November 23. At sea, on the Korea Maru.* I have seen the world—its beauties and its miseries, its seas and its cities, its deserts and its palaces, and now I return home to my soul! I went a long journey, thinking that I should find some new thing under the sun; but I find that I already knew love and duty, impulse and dreams; and what I found was what I had already felt—dressed in strange garments, and speaking strange tongues, but inwardly the same. The sight of my eyes and the hearing of my ears can give me no new worlds. I bring to the starting place the world which I took with me.

I do not know what I expected to find in the Orient, in India, and in Japan especially. Perhaps the outward manifestation of secret things in my own nature. I had dreamed of India long, lived in the essence of her wisdom and beauty, seen through the souls of her artists so continually that it was a perilous thing to put these dreams to the test—these marvelous and fantastic dreams which I had built up in my own mind, and had already, to some degree, expressed in my Indian dances.

I am beginning to see that I already possessed the soul of India right here in America, through the medium of the language of her artists; that the India I had adored since my first reading of the *Light of Asia* no longer existed—or rather it existed now for me much more

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intensely in the depth of my own spirit than in the poor huddled beggars lining the roadsides, or in the politicians shouting in the assemblies, or in mobs silently resisting the government.

To me, India had meant the highest flights into the realms of thought that the human race had attained; and in India I was shown a mile and a half of lepers on a road leading to a festival! A curious truth is beginning to dawn upon me: I see that I was sent to the Orient to give a truth as well as to receive one.

Perhaps a part of that offering was to reveal to the East the fact of a living beauty in the West. The Japanese, quick to catch meanings, said that our visit had done more than all the telephones and battle-ships to make a sympathetic understanding between two great peoples. They had not known until we came that America also worshipped beauty. . . .

*November* ——— In three days more we arrive. A long, monotonous trip; heavy winds and seas. Last night was charming. I talked the whole evening with a Buddhist abbot from a famous monastery in Japan, and with Dr. Kenneth Saunders, the American Buddhist scholar and writer. We had given, earlier in the evening, a little entertainment for the ship, with the girls parading in some of their new Oriental costumes. The abbot had apparently enjoyed it all hugely, Nautch dancing and all. He and his companions have been picturesque figures the whole trip. His lovely robes, his sweet and animated face and charming manners, created a delightful impression. At the end of our long discussion of Buddhist teaching and its possible influence on the Western world he gave me a little brown Buddhist rosary, and a poem that he had written while on the boat.

*America again. 7.30, in my cabin.* The two little Buddhist priests are looking at the Golden Gate, just near my window. The great waves are dashing against the dark rock. . . .

Keep to thy purpose, oh soul! Even as this ship.



**CHAPTER XIV: Denishawn House:** WELL, here we are, streaming down the gangplank onto the wharf. Home at last! Many relatives and friends are craning their necks even before we tie up. Dear Albert Bender is hurrying to embrace us, and gives me a lovely opal, which I promptly lose, thereby carrying on the tradition of opals. Everyone is laughing and hugging and shouting. And then our thoughts—June's and Buzz's and Stan's and Pearl's—go to the baggage. For, of course, in addition to everything we took to Asia we are bringing back dozens of crates—and a menagerie. Buzz has his cockatoos; Tiny Day has a black talking bird; Pearl has two lovely black and white Japanese spaniels; I have Dada, and some little colored birds in exquisite cages. We bring them down the gangplank one by one, and everybody stars open-mouthed at this gypsy encampment.

The great task of the customs looms ahead, and Buzz suddenly remembers that Em and the boys are waiting for him in Denver; I realize that Mother and Calkins are anxious to see me in Long Beach; June and Pearl are equally concerned about their friends and families. So Ted stands, a forlorn figure amidst the baggage, gazing after us reproachfully, and preparing to battle valiantly (and, let it hastily be added, successfully) with the customs men.

Our first important task was our American tour under Arthur Judson; our two long, fascinating, but hectic years in the Orient must now give an account of themselves.

We opened in Los Angeles. Our program consisted of new dances, new costumes and properties, all emanating proudly from the East.

After that opening night I thought of David Belasco, and a fond plan he had for a *Dubarry* scene. Like a child he had gleefully introduced all the animals he could find into a levee of Dubarry-Carter; until the tearful pleadings of the property man made him, like a scolded boy, change his plans. In the market scene for the *Nautch* dance, Ted and I were as inspired as D. B. We brought the whole menagerie on. Dada rode, lording it over them all, in a wooden cage, through which he promptly bit his way and climbed onto the shoulder

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of his bearer, from which vantage point he began to address the audience in such unmistakable terms that he stopped the show. The cast collapsed in laughter, following the audience's cue; and we all settled down ■ five minutes of fun until Dada was borne yelling off the stage, and the *Nautch* dance could go on.

It may be interesting to see how we translated the experiences we had just come through into art forms. The wonderful night in the Shwé Dagon Pagoda, and the experience with the Chinese monk, became my dance of the Buddhist nun. I appeared bald to the audience, because I wore a chamois skullcap. The robe was copied as exactly as possible, and gongs were played offstage, with only a little thread of music offered by Vaughn to support the very simple but effective plastique of invocation.

That glorious October day at the Altar of Heaven was now *White Jade*. Pearl wrestled with unbelievably beautiful drapes, Buzz lighted it exquisitely, Mary Ferguson had helped us to shop, and my tall Chinese screens were the background for what proved to be the most popular solo I brought back from the Orient. Ted's long hours with that generous Koshiro Matsumoto on the roof of the Imperial Theater had resulted in a unique offering for America: *Momiji-Gari*. It had court ladies and demons, a general and a mountain god, a whole Japanese ballet, and some real and very beautiful properties. Ted did a courageous thing and got away with it: he played the role of a court lady first, then changed into a demon for the exciting conclusion of the ballet. It was very thrilling, and gave American audiences an idea of Japanese drama; and Charles Weidman's splendid contribution to it must be remembered, for he did a really fine bit of character work in the Japanese manner.

Mei Lan Fang had by now been transformed into Anne Douglas, who, made up, looked amazingly like him. The dance-drama was called *General Wu's Return*, and was an impression of the evening he gave us in Peking. Charles Weidman was a fierce war lord; Anne was a lovely and delicate heroine, daintily plying her oars on a little boat drifting down a stream; while George Steares made the hit of his life as the property man. Ted's great solo, *The Cosmic Dance of Shiva*, was his major contribution, and proved later to be one of the dances that will endure as a superb memento of the East.

There were also Javanese court dances and shadow plays with puppets, the music played offstage on an *aklon* as Ted and the whole company squatted around shaking the bamboo tubes while the girls, dancing behind a sheet, gave an imitation of an evening at a puppet

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show. Doris made an enormous hit as a saucy little Burmese gamin, doing modern "releases" in her tight-fitting Burmese skirt and smoking a "whackin' white cheroot" while manipulating two fans and a parasol at the same time. The audiences on the tour liked all the new things—especially *White Jade* and *Shiva*.

From Los Angeles we went far afield. The only member we lost was Buzz. This Oriental trip was, we must remember, a detour for him, and not his regular job. But he, too, gave a very good account of his travels in the East by promptly opening a shop in Hollywood. With unfailing good taste he had bought art objects all through the trip in a most industrious and systematic way and, when he got home, I suppose he felt that something had to be done with all the lovely bronzes and screens that he had not been able to resist. Hollywood soon became acquainted with an art shop of unique quality. It was restrained, while the others were for the most part a bit flamboyant. It did not have a large stock at the beginning, but what it did have was of the best; and Buzz's quietly genial personality very soon made patrons return again and again after the first half hour spent in the St. Denis Bazaar. Since those days he has been backwards and forwards to China and Japan a number of times. The store grew so that Buzz was forced to build his own establishment and expand in several directions; and now he is aided and abetted by Em, who has become a real businesswoman, and the boys, and Joseph Alimoto, a loyal survivor of the Hindu boys of *Radha*. Joe is part of the St. Denis tradition, and is a faithful friend as well as an efficient helper.

By the time we reached Salt Lake City I suddenly awakened to the fact that months of one-night stands lay before me; and my unquenchable searchings for some creative peace came over me again. It seemed years since I had been allowed a moment's pure feeling. Everything had been adulterated, thwarted or suppressed; and I only began to realize this now that the tension of the Orient was relaxed.

Would my whole career as a dancer pass like an illusion? Had I ever really been a dancer? The things that I have always tried to "dance" are things that ordinarily are spoken or written, or preached or lived. The eternal quest for truth, the ecstasy of an instant's communication with a divine being, the harmony of rituals, beautifully performed, was the story of my art and my religious life; and I felt I had broken myself on the wheel of a great dissonance between the poverty of my medium and the thing to be said. In all my career I have never had enough light, enough people, enough music with which to tell my story.

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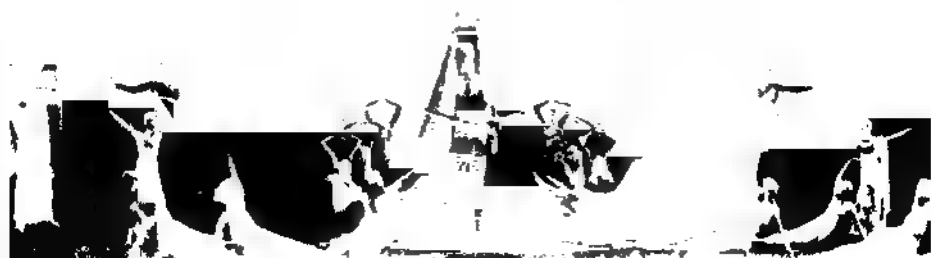
I knew this, but the world did not. There even grew up a rumor that instead of giving our art in a pure form we were popularizing it. This was not true. For years we had given the public the finest and most uncontaminated art of which we were capable; and we had by no means received the recompense that it deserved. Now we could do it no longer. Truly, we were nearly done for, caught between the upper and nether millstones of our own idealism and the public apathy. If it had not been for friends who came to our assistance, we could not have continued to give the audiences these things which they demanded, but in nowise paid for.

I was in revolt. It seemed to me that for years Ted and I had drudged and endured, and now I wanted some harmony between my outer and my inner lives. I suppose another artist would have been satisfied with the success that had come to me. Why was I, then, so restless and unsatisfied? Because I knew my essential offering was creative and not interpretative, and for me to go on week after week and year after year repeating my used-up creations while my whole being cried for new forms brought me only to despair. It was inevitable that in order to express any part of the purely spiritual dances which were my soul as an artist I must show them in distorted form, in an alien environment.

However, it was equally certain that beneath the activities of school and tours a great conception for the care of these spiritual children would take shape in my mind. The complete idea did not come to me for another three or four years, but the forces were accumulating which made the conclusion inevitable.

Into that creative impulse I fed my communion with other minds and hearts. I permitted myself to be lifted on the visions and faiths of other and deeper souls than mine. On these long train journeys, in hotels, in dressing rooms, they were all with me: the Bible, *Science and Health*, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, the Bhagavadgita, *The Light of Asia*, the blessed Emerson, and Ouspensky's wonderful *Tertium Organum*, so lucidly translated by Claude Bragdon. They fed not only my spiritual but my aesthetic life—that art life which produced children of the brain rather than children of the body, and was forever at cross purposes with the so-called normal life.

In our life, day by day, Ted and I were eager that our flesh-and-blood “children,” the company, should draw from us what they needed. They were, on the whole, eager and young, and many of them were acutely sensitive to beauty of thought or form. On Ted's birthday we held a little party in Beaumont, Texas; and of course we invited them.







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Ted read to us very beautifully, and gave splendid interpretations, from *Tertium Organum*. The children were engrossed, and asked many questions. We spoke of the four-dimensional body, and Ted said, "Now listen. Let's get this thing straight, and not let our brains go around in meaningless circles. Ouspensky says that the perfect body of man, which we do not see as yet, nor even imagine—because our minds are confused by the constant pictures of our time-body—exists now in four dimensions. If this is so, and the intersecting time-divisions of our sense life are removed, we can see not only the perfect body that exists now, but also that perfect body which exists before birth and after death. It's along these lines that the future dance, with its geometric patterns based upon a greater understanding of our fourth-dimensional life, will be of the greatest value to the dance form, to art, and to life."

When the evening was over we had had so good a time that we decided we would repeat our party. After coming together several times, we called ourselves the Esoteric Group. Later I dropped the title because of its connotations of mediumistic hocus-pocus; but in spite of one-night stands our little group found ways of meeting, and with this simple beginning came the unfoldment which culminated, several years later, in my Society of the Spiritual Arts.

In all our minds during this time was what we grandly called the Plan. For years Ted and I and the staff and students had had a dream of what we called the Greater Denishawn. This dream was to include not only country acreage and a colony, a theater for the American dance, a magazine (of which Ted gave a sample in the first numbers of *The Denishawn Magazine*), but a hundred new branches of education and knowledge of the dance and its cooperating arts which reached beyond anything that we had been able to achieve heretofore. I was to have a temple for my religious ideas for the dance, and eventually a chapel in which to demonstrate them.

The whole project would, we believed, have advanced the American dance to a more permanent footing, and would have focused the energies of thousands of art students in a definite plan of great beauty and usefulness. Colonel Fletcher of San Diego hoped that we should become in some way a part of his great project at Grossmont, California, a place where a number of artists already had found sanctuary. He talked of giving us several hundred acres up in a valley in the mountains behind Grossmont, where he would build an open-air theater and bring the world to us: that dream of all artists who plan colonies. Much later a charming man over a luncheon table, hearing my cry for more space, offered a thousand acres in Arizona, where he

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already was making some splendid experiments in ceramics. But it took a better organizing brain than mine to conjure with a thousand acres, although the remembrance still lingers wistfully in my mind.

It was evident that this plan naturally could come into expression only by the cooperation of us all, and here is where our heartburnings, our weaknesses, and our egotisms came to grief. Although we were in an intellectual agreement I began to see that Ted had to adjust things in the depths of his own soul, that June had to come to some conclusion regarding her allegiances before we could serve the ideal that was before us, that my renunciation of my own plans for work or fame must give place to a natural unfolding. We could very easily go ahead with our plans for the physical structure of Denishawn House, but something deeper was needed to make it a logical step toward the greater things we planned. As I look back now I see that those adjustments were never made.

Meantime we were faced with fulfilling our decision, made on that long night journey in India: we must build Denishawn House. Of course we chose New York, because it was the great center of the artistic world in America. So, while plans in our minds were going forward for Denishawn House itself, there were the greater plans for which this would be a unit always hovering in our minds. We talked architects, plans, schedules; and on this plane we were able to advance rapidly. In California we had seen the delightful Dodds again: Bill, known to everyone in Los Angeles as architect and *bon vivant*, and Mrs. Dodd, a charming hostess who always gathered interesting people about her. The Dodds had been warm, generous patrons of ours for a long time, and they now listened to our tale of the building of Denishawn House with real sympathy. We could not afford the expense of a grand architect, or we would have immediately engaged the estimable Bill. But as it was, he generously gave us a few ideas on the back of an envelope, by which we profited greatly in our later talks with the builder.

At Omaha Ted took advantage of three open days and rushed to New York. He bought the corner lots in Van Cortlandt which adjoined the property Buzz had acquired for me years before, met with Ninion Jameson, the architect-contractor, let the contract for the building, and rejoined the company.

Meanwhile the tour was rapidly bringing us to New York, and the four Carnegie Hall performances. These were the peak of the whole Denishawn organization. We had come a long way from the little school in St. Paul Street; we had deepened and expanded our

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activities; and New York turned out in its best clothes when the Denishawners arrived to show what they had learned in the Orient. Three hundred people were turned away at each performance, and we grossed some twenty-three thousand dollars.

After the performances there were cheers, and crowds backstage, and all the earmarks of popular success. But on the last night, with the audience an unconscious but enthusiastic participant, the rift between Ted and me was widened.

In looking back on that night, I realize that I did an unforgivable thing, but my innocence was quite genuine at the time. Impelled by the bravos and cheers, I stepped before the curtain alone and, apparently giving the impression that I had borne and sustained the whole Denishawn School unaided, made a plea for support of our Plan. There was great applause, and apparently a warm response to my words. But when I stepped backstage I realized that I had made an unpardonable mistake. Ted was furious. As far as he was concerned I had negated him and all his years of devotion, all his plans and his identification with Denishawn. I had presented myself in the guise of the solitary head of this whole organization.

June sided with him, and I could make no amends now that the damage was done. Under the circumstances, the damage done became irreparable. I do not mean to imply that Ted was so unreasonable that this breach could not have been healed; but this situation was a symbol of what in retrospect appears as a necessary stage in the fully rounded development of us both. The years that we had spent working in such close harness necessarily caused certain faculties and attributes of our separate beings to lie undeveloped or atrophied. And, both consciously and unconsciously, we were seeking to assert our full and individual stature. But the reverberations of that speech echoed in our lives until the end of Denishawn.

An interesting, quite objective development accrued from these Carnegie performances. We dancers, artistically as successful and financially more successful than many famous musicians or actors, were treated to the briefest and most condescending mention in the city press. Critics were sent to cover the opening night who had no training and very little sympathy for the dance. We had battled for proper and dignified critical recognition for years. After our Carnegie performances we were treated in the same cursory manner, and our righteous indignation was aroused. With the enthusiastic support of various people, including the sensitive and redoubtable Edith J. R. Isaacs of *The Theatre Arts Monthly*, a petition was drawn up. Ted's and my name

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headed several hundred signatures, and copies of this petition were sent to all the newspapers. In New York, the *Times*, the *Herald-Tribune*, and the *World* each assigned a temporary and experimental dance critic, and a precedent was established that has gained in importance to this day.

Denishawn House was going up rapidly, but it was the Plan, in spite of my speech, which still filled up the crevices of our talk. We had discussed our plans for this future of the American dance with my good friend, Claude Bragdon, whose long interest in theater and stage design made him seem a fitting person to undertake this task. The fact that he is, besides all that, a man of great intellect and spiritual vision makes for the highest craftsmanship in art. He is one of those people who is best found in the heart of his writings, such writings as his *Delphic Woman* or *Four Dimensional Vistas*. And yet, beneath a slightly diffident exterior, one never fails to find mirrored back in a strangely luminous way one's own dreams and visions of the spiritual life.

He was intensely sympathetic with our idea, and we commissioned him to plan a theater and a school, which he did with consummate skill. Then we agreed that it would be well to have Hugh Ferriss make an ideal drawing in a manner that would intrigue people's interest.

Hugh Ferriss is one of the great modern architects of city buildings and has published many books on the future architecture of America. At the same time he is what I sentimentally call a romantic artist as well as a draftsman, and his drawing for us was a thing of beauty and inspiration. It stood about four feet high and was a flawless projection of an idea. The lines were pure and graceful, and the building was crowned with a little temple where I was to hold my dance rituals.

The project for the theater and the school—these should never be confused with Denishawn House, which was intended as the private home and studio of Ted and me—called for a huge sum to build and endow. June and I made some sporadic efforts to raise the money, but the moment was apparently not right, and the plans and drawing were laid aside for the time. It did seem to us that some of the millions of dollars which were spent on orchestras and museums and colleges could be diverted to support so universal an art as the dance. It is a little tragic as I look back at it now, but perhaps the story is not yet finished.

We had permanently closed our California Denishawn by now, and all our thoughts were concentrated on New York and Van Cortlandt Park, where the building was rapidly nearing completion. It was already

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proving a financial drain on us, and after much reluctance and misgivings we signed a contract with George Wintz to go out with his version of the *Ziegfeld Follies*. It meant another tour, but we saw no alternative. When I looked at the completed building of Denishawn later I said, "Every brick, a one-night stand," and I was not exaggerating.

At Corpus Christi, Texas, one of the most delightful men Ted and I have ever known met us at the station and took us to our hotel. He was a tall, rangy youth with an infectious smile and a charming manner and his name was Fred Beckman. I can see the three of us sitting at a soda counter shortly after we arrived, laughing as though we were old friends, and then going down to the beach for a swim. We talked about our plans quite naturally with Fred, and he seemed immensely intrigued with this outfit of dancers, the like of which had never come his way before. More quickly than any of us could turn about, he had joined our company and become our personal representative.

Many hours of monotonous travel and many difficult situations were lightened and turned into a holiday by Fred's infectious gaiety and skill. He genuinely loved the concept of Denishawn and he did more than his share in trying to bring the complete idea into manifestation.

During a four-day vacation at Christmas time we rushed back to New York. Denishawn House was completed, and Pearl, with her skill and devotion, had furnished the house. Getting out of the taxi, Ted and I ran back a few feet for a view of the house before we dashed in. How big it looked—how lovely, shining yellow on its little knoll, with the trees of the park framing it and the waters of the reservoir lying at its feet. We clung together for a moment. At last our home. Then we ran up the stairs, the door of the studio was flung open, and there were five or six friends who had been invited to dinner to welcome us. We ran like excited children from the cellars to the roof. The studio—forty feet by sixty—and the roof overlooking the city fascinated us the most. Finally we settled down in the studio before the huge crackling fire. At last we had found sanctuary.

The next morning we stood again on the roof, and then our serpent entered this Eden. Country people speak of land lust. I had never understood it before. But now we looked over the parapet on the east side and saw four lots which in our imagination were already occupied by someone else and depriving us of light. We looked to the north and saw a house which had just been started. At once we decided to buy the lots and the house to—oh, irony—protect ourselves.

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The next day we rushed back to our tour. It was not until the early spring that we really came to live in Denishawn House.

This huge building beside the lake, high up in New York, came quickly to be known all over the city as Denishawn House. For more than seven years it contained within its Moorish walls the tragedies and comedies, the ambitions and sufferings of Ted and myself and all the beloved members who made up that notable tribe called the Denishawners. Until its dissolution we left it only for sporadic engagements.

Denishawn House was a state of mind, and at its best an ideal design for living. During the greater part of its existence it presented the strange and seemingly unintelligible picture of a great railway station where countless people came and went, and at the rush hour, if one merely viewed the scene as an onlooker, one saw only frantic people, dashing about, worrying over their relatives and their baggage and their schedules, with seemingly no time for the pleasantries of life and with no visible purpose.

The dramatis personae, moving through the various scenes of our growing drama were Ted and myself, Pearl, Margerie and Fred, and after them, Sol Cohen and Paul Mathis, Doris and Charles, Wells Hively, Evelyn Latour, Klarna Pinska, Lester Shafer, Erna Wassell, Anna Austin, Jack Cole, and Wayne Cartwright. These personalities lived, moved, and had their being during the hours of the day and night in this house—this house that started out to be a home and ended as a tomb of buried loves and plans. Friends, coming from the outside and seeing classes in orderly process in the big studio, coming to parties where all seemed gay and friendly, having tea with me in the afternoon, or, above all, going up on the roof to look over the romantic, shimmering waters of the reservoir on a starlit night, would exclaim quite naturally, "How happy you must all be, working in this environment!" I grew to dread those words.

For it soon became a place of sad beauty, unhappy souls, lovers seeking love and ambitions and finding no footholds to climb upon. It could have been called a school—it was intended for a home—and finally it became a chapel, and in the end vanished from our lives like a troubled dream.

Yet much of the surface of the days was charming and friendly, joyful. A characteristic day began with Mr. and Mrs. Stratton in the kitchen and the pleasant sounds of breakfast. Ted and I invariably had our breakfasts in bed, with Dada dancing for his toast. Then my journal for a while or a book of devotions, while Ted sat with a piece

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of toast in one hand and the morning mail in the other, as he gave orders for the day. In due time he went down to prepare for classes and invariably found the children delayed at their breakfast by the eternal arguments stimulated by a concert or a lecture the night before. Some were taking the side of beauty and my romantic ideas and others were holding stoutly to the new modern approach. I might or I might not go down when Ted did, and anybody watching me trailing a diaphanous dressing gown through the halls or across the studio, giving a word of encouragement to a class or hovering only a brief moment in the office, would receive the decided impression that I was a lady of leisure and everyone else did the work. But to forestall any such false impressions I rise to say that the hundred and one things that I kept busy at were not always scheduled and sometimes did not show for days, but my industry was unflagging and generally productive.

Perhaps some of the teachers or students came to me and we sat down over the morning cup of coffee. A great bond of affection bound me to many of them. Evelyn Latour, giving her exquisitely mannered ballet class, was a lovely creature fresh from the Paris opera and its training and tradition, upon which she was, in a highly individual manner, superimposing modern techniques and making of jazz an art. Or Lester Shafer, my blessed Buddy, comes up to talk about the head-dresses for *Angkor Vat*. Buddy is a dancer, and a good one, but his clever mind runs down into his fingers and he can do unbelievable things with buckram and a pot of paint. Later Buddy and I danced the love duet in the *Angkor Vat*. I always found much deep and loyal friendship in him.

Then there was Harry Losee, that keenly intelligent boy, infected even in those days with drive and ambition, but never losing sight of the quality he wished to add to the dance. I watched him once rehearsing a group in his ballet called *Saint Sebastian*, and I thought what a terrific pity that his superb choreography did not have its proper setting. After he left us he spent some time at the Dance Center, under that indefatigable pair, Gluck-Sandor and Felicia Sorel, my good friends. His *John the Baptist* with them was a simple, moving piece of work.

Or I had the somewhat disconcerting experience of talking to Jack Cole, a disturbing youngster who didn't quite know what he wanted, but wanted it intensely. He had an extraordinary body, a keen, inquisitive mind, and a rebellious will. Ted sensed a great development in Jack from the first, and certain elements of his temperament appealed to me as having the equipment of a real artist. I can still see him at rehearsals



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carrying on with a mixture of disobedience and intense cooperation, bringing the impress of his own unmistakable personality to everything he did. Later he joined Anna Austin in her studio, and they began a whole series of modern Oriental choreographies that were stunning and unique. Because of the force of his own temperament his career may be unpredictable but it will be inevitable.

This brings me at once to my beloved Anna. I immediately move away from the dancing class and think of her as my faithful and devoted child, for with the loving consent of her parents I took her over well. She came to us with a delicious sense of humor, exuberant spirits, and a love of the dance, but with little intention at the time of putting in a lot of hard work. This latter state of mind soon changed, and in due course she opened her own studio, which, after the closing of Denishawn House, became my most important center, because here was a younger set pledged to carry on as best they could the spirit of my work. Anna herself has become a fine technician and a dancer of great charm.

Sweet, charming Margaret Eddy, the daughter of the Sherwood Eddys who are spreading the gospel of social justice and faith in God over the earth's surface, talked to me a little about the dance and much about romance, and finally asked if she might have her wedding in Denishawn House. We were thrilled, and the whole household set out to make it a lovely one and fitting to her mood, and watched with much sentimental and tender affection as she and the charming Kerry Smith, her bridegroom, walked up the aisle toward our improvised altar, made of my Japanese screens and some lovely arched candlesticks, carved by Buddy for this exalted occasion. At her request I danced at the wedding, and it was all gay and joyful and very romantic.

I loved talking to all of them; I loved to see the tendrils of hope, idealism, ambition begin to seek a place on which to grow. When the morning coffee was over there was a luncheon, perhaps, downtown, where I delivered myself of well-chosen words on some special aspect of the dance that was gnawing me at the time. In the afternoon there would be tea or special guests who came to be shown the school or to bring some flavor of their own. Nicholas Roerich, that distinguished explorer and painter, was one of these guests. He came at my invitation after I had spent a delightful hour with him discussing my vision of what the arts should do for religion and our spiritual meditations. He had said that America must eventually be taught by art in all its forms, and that the great museum, which bears his name, was organized for this purpose.

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He came partly to see Denishawn House and partly to see me dance, as he had never been to any of my performances. He looked and acted like a Chinese sage, so naturally I did a number of Oriental things over which he expressed his pleasure. The next day, to my great delight, he sent me his beautiful book, which contained reproductions in color of his unearthly paintings of Tibet and the East.

Sometimes an afternoon would be devoted to photography—the inevitable—that has dogged and delighted my footsteps ever since my first photographs by the well-loved dean of them all, the White Studios, twenty-five years before. Sunami, for instance, appears in the doorway, his little Japanese figure silhouetted against the afternoon light. He is carrying two suitcases half as big as himself. He comes in a few steps, sets them down, and announces in a very low tone, which one has to stoop to catch, "Please—I have arrived." There is a scurrying of the household in all directions. "Sunami has come!" Hasty consultations with Pearl, everyone cleared out of the studio, armfuls of costumes brought in, Buddy or Wayne Cartwright assigned to the lights, Sunami beginning to disappear behind his big black camera cloth at the other end of the big studio. At last her Serene Highness is ready. In this case it is Kwannon, and the result of the afternoon is exquisite poems of photography.

With the afternoon tasks over there is always the lovely twilight hour, when Denishawn House becomes essentially romantic. Perhaps Wells plays for me. Wells says that when he first came to me I did not like him, but that cannot be true. He was the shy, sensitive boy Sol Cohen had told me so much about, and I did not at first see in him the sturdy elements that were necessary to anyone who assumed directorship of my musical affairs. I knew how difficult I could be, but this was a case of the terrible meek. Wells had the resiliency of the non-assertive mind that in the end always owns everything. Not only did I accept him in spite of his youthful looks, but he has been with me ever since, which speaks volumes for his disposition and my appreciation.

I can never say properly what I think of Wells, for I always see a faint embarrassed look come into his eyes, so I hastily speak about his playing and his compositions. His playing has supported my dances with superb artistry, and his compositions have fed my creative spirit with a rare and satisfying beauty. Wells should have been a monk, sometime in the Middle Ages, and allowed to live out his monkish days dreaming of the ineffable and composing music. Instead, like the rest of us, he has had to do battle with the Goliaths; but someday his heart and brain will make a real contribution to American music.

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Meantime, we knew many delightful hours aside from work. I remember early spring evenings in the summer dining room, when a spray of dogwood made patterns on the windows. Wells is arranging the lamps and the cushions on the couch so that there shall be an intimate quiet, a charm of mood for communications of the spirit and perhaps a faint joy in the heart. There is a big armchair near the window and he is shyly reading from a journal of his early days in Paris, and his love for all things French. I listen to him, relaxed and peaceful, and then we talk, half playfully and half seriously, of love and music and Paris in the rain. Delicate moods, supported by desire, but not of it.

And tenderest memories of all were the rare hours of sheer beauty spent with Ada de Lachau in the studio, often in the midst of confusion and drudgery. She would come down from her home in New Rochelle; and when the business of the day was over, she would sit down at the piano and tempt me with the first strains of her music. I would forget all my troubles and sing blithely everything ranging from simple ballads to unwieldy operatic arias. Or another day she would play with concentrated intensity the almost Wagnerian measures of a beautiful ballet called the *Tigress*, which she had composed for me years ago to a theme of Balzac and which to her and to my infinite regret I have never produced.

When she was gone I could never resume my ordinary life immediately. Instead, I thought how beautiful she was in her fragility, how the essence of divine loving seemed gathered in her eyes and the caressing beauty of her voice. Her hands were like tender prayers for this wayward and willful child of hers; her touch was healing. She was an unforgettable, rare soul, hovering between earth and heaven, breathing out love with her whole being.

After dinner we would nearly always hear the strains of a waltz or something romantic and nebulous floating up from the big studio. This was "Wayne's hour" and I think we all waited for it. Nothing was ever said; sometimes one of the girls would slip in and sit on the floor, but more likely we would all, wherever we were, pause for a minute and smile and sniff this little waft of sentiment.

These brief but lovely periods ran like a golden thread through the fabric of the days of strain and hurry, performances planned and given, of hectic rehearsals in the great studio, eternal telephones being answered, and classes going on with their monotonous beat. It was these hours of the day, or mealtimes in the cheery dining room, or evenings of creative dancing, the lights turned low and music filling the shadowy

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room, that I like to remember. Young dancing figures moving in the patterns of their own making, free and happy and creative. Other days downstairs with Pearl and the sewing woman in the cellar, trunks piled everywhere, costumes scattered over everything, a moment's irritation over some forgotten trifle, or a still more serious business of insubordination when Ted takes charge gently but firmly. Students from out of town getting settled in the fall, upstairs bedrooms full of light, and a sense of activity and friendliness.

In the midst of all this we found time to give some really lovely parties. The big room was shadowy and cool, with the huge mirror at one end reflecting the tall, lighted candles. Couches were brought from against the wall and rugs laid about, so that what was a classroom by day became a huge drawing room at night. Sometimes it looked like a great medieval hall with the big window at the west framing a sunset through the trees or the frosty stars at night. On evenings of a party everyone was on tiptoe. Our invitations were out and we wondered who would come. Will Roxy be there with vague suggestions of letting me dance with "enough lights, enough costumes, and enough music for once in my life"? He did come but, alas, left soon for Europe and forgot me, or had troubles of his own, poor man. Yes, Anne Morgan came one night, and Mrs. Vanderbilt. And Kenneth Murchison and Dr. Genthe, and Nicholas Roerich and many others who were kind enough to venture to this outpost in all weathers and seasons.

Among our indefatigably warm friends were Paul and Mrs. Schwartz, late of the German diplomatic service. He represented to me always the old German regime, and I always felt a party would be incomplete if they did not come. Rafaelo Diaz brought his beautiful voice, his genuine interest in what his friends were doing, and his helping hand. He always made Ted and me feel that everything was possible.

Anita Brown came. She calls me Dance and I call her Poetry, and we give the beauty salute every time we meet. Kendall Mussey, with his singularly happy blending of commerce and art, first with his music school in Brooklyn and then with the Arden Galleries in New York, helped me "talk big." Alexander Alexay, my good friend and accompanist, often played with his usual brilliance and style. Leon Carroll, that vivid and beautiful artist in flowers came, and Major Felton, an artist of a different and striking *genre*. Among our most precious guests were those inimitable Doctors Parry, Angenette and Eleanor, who brought radiance and an enduring love to us, and my dear and clever Moritz Jagendorf who had been in and out of my life for twenty years.

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We were a little proud of our parties in those days. We never had grand collations or real drinks either before or after prohibition, partly because of my old prejudice against "likker" and partly because we could not afford it. Yet I believe people did enjoy themselves without it and were reasonably content with coffee and cider and doughnuts and sandwiches, especially since these were served so charmingly by the girl students—a compensation for the men, at least.

People usually arrived early and stayed late. They spread all over the house, down into the cellar to see where we kept the costume trunks, branching off into my room to pay their respects to Dada—who held court to the amusement of the men, whom he loved, and the consternation of the women, whom he detested. Up in the tower there was a little library for which Albert Bender had given us the shelves and many of the books, and here the dance and art volumes were lovingly shown to those interested. From the library one could step onto the broad roof overlooking the city. And many a romantic couple found their way around behind the tower where they could have a moment's peace looking at the stars.

Many friendly artists came and played for us. I do not remember dancers from the outside doing much, because, I suppose, we wanted to do all the dancing ourselves. But the musicians were kind and stimulating.

Two or three very special parties stand out. Once when the delightful Baroness Nostitz of Germany, the niece of President von Hindenburg, came. She had seen me dance years ago in the old days in Berlin, and she had said to herself that if she ever came to America she would look me up, and so she did. She brought a precious thing and laid it in my hands—the full, translated critique of Hugo von Hofmannstahl, which I had never read in its entirety. On this special evening she trailed a small court of young men who were bent on making her brief visit to America happy.

She brought the old world to us and we were enchanted. A few of the students slid in and sat on the floor at the far end, watching and listening without disturbing our mood. For this was not a regular party but a very definite and selfish occasion of my own, when I intended ■ revive the spirit of my Germany.

At another time we made a grand occasion of the visit of Carrilo, that Mexican artist and inventor who had presented the musical world with the Thirteenth Sound.

To him, our musical understanding and intervals were too coarse-fibered, and he wished to establish something which went even further

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than the Oriental scale. He split the notes of the traditional scale wide open, and the range of tone that was provided astonished me. All the notes between a note were heard and the effect of continuous and incredibly subtle sound brought a completely new awareness. A soprano sang to the accompaniment of his musicians, and her voice passed through the tones as through a stream of water. I danced a little, improvising to these strange intervals, and I told Mr. Carrilo that I felt his music opened up extraordinary fields to the dance, because these infinitely finer intervals more nearly paralleled the undulation of the muscles of the body than the ordinary music. As with the flexibilities of the human voice, which until now had always seemed to me more nearly related to movement than our man-made sounds, so this strange disclosure of new dimensions of tone enabled me, as a dancer, to articulate my body with a finer sensitivity than ordinary music allowed. This reminded me of an experience in Peterborough when, one evening, I moved to the amazing convolutions of design and color that are the phenomenon of that extraordinary instrument, the color organ, played by its inventor, Thomas Wilfred.

Of course I went afield also.

George Grey Barnard was an old friend. Not long before, at his home near The Cloisters, I had dined with him and Amelia Earhart and listened to her shy, simple explanations of some of her amazing flights. He suggested then that I bring some of the students to his studio, where he was then completing his priceless collection of medieval art. I gladly agreed, and the girls and I stood in the high-ceilinged room with one of his monumental reliefs towering above us, and listened to him say very simply, "All life is struggle. Did you ever stop to think how a butterfly emerges into life?" And with that he began an illustration with his flexible hands of the twistings and writhings of the cocoon, and his eyes lighted so that one could see the freedom and the exquisite beauty of this creature as it fought its way into life.

His great vision for humanity, his wit and pungent humor all made an unforgettable afternoon for my adoring youngsters.

One afternoon Troy Kinney came to make an etching of my Tagore poem. The studio was cleared of all activities. Indian screens were placed, the famous vina, which I had bought from the museum in Madras, was laid tenderly near the vividly colored chair on which I was to sit. The lights were adjusted to give the proper effect, the draperies were arranged, and finally, as an Indian poetess, I picked up the long-necked instrument and assumed my pose.

Troy, having established himself on an uncomfortable chair and

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spread out his materials, gazed intently at his model. Any venturesome souls, lingering in the corners, were abashed into sudden silence by his energy and directness, and presently his comfortable hat, which up until now had reposed at a perilous angle on his head, was impatiently tossed aside. Next went his coat; his tie was unloosed, a match was struck and a cigarette lighted, and only the scratching of his pencil was heard.

It soon became plain that the master had something on his mind. A distant rumble was heard; the cigarette was removed, the etching pencil held briefly in the air, while Troy delivered himself of one of his irrepressible remarks. It might have concerned the disposition of his model or it might have related to a dancer's ignorance of design, or it could possibly have been a disquisition upon Pavlova versus the later Russians. Sometime during the afternoon, Po, the Japanese spaniel, would make his slow pilgrimage down the studio, sniff at Troy to make sure he was the right man, and then settle in the exact center of his red cushion. Or Dada would be brought in to crawl up Troy's arm and snuggle against his neck. When no one paid attention to his affectionate little noises, he would start yelling in good earnest. This was always the signal for his hasty retreat, and possibly a rest for the lady posing, so long as she did not disturb her draperies.

One night I went to a meeting of that remarkable organization of Mrs. Mabel Keep called the Geographic Players. In a manner they had stolen some part of the thunder from one of my favorite ideas. For years, I had been toying with the conviction that geologists and travelers should come together with artists and make known their findings and doings in a more living manner than that achieved by the motion pictures or the magazines. And that seemed to be Mrs. Keep's idea also. On the Chinese evening I heard Princess Der Ling give one of her talks, and renewed the brief meeting I had had with her in Peking, and on the Indian evening I had the fun of being, as they say in vaudeville, on the same bill with Lowell Thomas. We had a few moment's chat offstage, and then, with his smiling benediction, I sailed into my *Nautch* in an effort to make vivid to an American audience some of the actualities of India.

India was still and forever my spiritual mother, and I counted among my most honored friends Swami Nikilalanda of the Ramakrishna-Vivikananda Center in New York. He is one of those modern monks and proselytes of a radiant life. Occasionally he brought his group together at a dinner, and speakers of various philosophic trends met in complete harmony. One evening, I remember, found Claude Bragdon;

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Swami Paramananda; Dan Dopal Mukerji, the author of that prose-poem "My Brother's Face"; Das Gupta, who steered an unerring course for his Fellowship of Faiths over troubled seas and into safe harbors every year; Hazel Krans; a small group from Denishawn; and myself, very pleased to be among the philosophers.

To me the Swami harmonized in his own being and in his simple and lucid explanations, the deep, underlying spirit of that enduring Hindu philosophy which regards the being of man as sustained by and functioning within the great embrace of Brahma.

But always beneath these pleasant forays into graceful living were the tensions of the classes, rehearsals for the pupils, the endless worry over bills—it is a miracle to me that with the depression coming on, Ted kept so even a keel—and the slow but unmistakable cracks in the structure of Denishawn.

Five years before, Martha Graham had left; two years later, Louis; and now Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman were beginning to feel the need of farther fields. Their little group was in reality a triumvirate which included Pauline Lawrence, that devoted comrade of their careers who was Doris' Pearl as well as her Louis, and who later took on the dignity of managership. And I think in these days Pauline felt very strongly that the only way Doris and Charles could expand was by separation from the forms of Denishawn.

It is perfectly clear to me in retrospect that even with the leaving of all these children from the home nest Denishawn could have continued to go on, new children would have been born and trained, and the institution held together if Ted and I had been a harmonious entity. But with no singleness of purpose the rift for all of us widened, and soon it could not be mended. Ted and I and Ted and Doris discussed the situation at some length, and I think we all hoped some amicable arrangement could be arrived at, but we found ourselves forced to go through the nerve-wracking experience of a formal meeting where all the slumbering resentments and unresolved discussions which covered a period of months were brought up as the vital issues of the occasion.

The desire of Doris and Charles to be on their own had been coming for a long time, and I can only indicate what their cumulative reasons were. As I understand it, they sensed the power of the new influences that were then coming from Germany. They wanted Denishawn to incorporate these new elements, but certain confused issues in our personal relationships at this time made such a step impossible.

I feel that our reactionary attitudes both disappointed them and, to some degree, stopped our own progress. We, in turn, were balked by



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several displays of self-willed egotism on their side. As I look back now and realize what has happened since, I am grateful beyond words that the major portion of these issues—the old and the young point of view, the clashing of egotisms—has dissolved, and that once more the old affection and appreciation is manifesting itself. But we are dealing with what happened at that meeting, and the following letter, which I have to this day, and which I did not send in its entirety, strikes a singularly prophetic note.

Dear Doris: I am glad that something has been arrived at that releases your ideas and energies for as much expression as is now possible. I have always had—and now more than ever—faith in you as a human being, fine, strong, delicate in feeling and emotion. As a creative artist what you are now doing is only a gesture, an indication of what you could do with more time and tools. Of this I feel sure.

However, the purpose of this letter is to make to you my statement of release from the working basis of Denishawn. I think Ted and I have built up the outer structure a good deal at the cost of our own souls. I feel more to blame than anyone, for I have known for a long time that the finer and freer Denishawn could not arise until a new order of spiritual consciousness was arrived at.

As far as I am concerned the old Denishawn is dead. We have had a house divided against itself. Our distressing scene the other day was only one of a long series. Yet it served to bring to a climax the errors in all our consciousness.

At five o'clock that next morning I realized quietly and finally that someone had to make a definite mental gesture of solution to the problem, and I saw that it was up to me to do it. Ted has always claimed that in my decisions, or more often lack of them, have rested either the progress or the disorders of the school and the theater. So, for me, I have to begin something in my life all over again. Our greatest freedom and self-expression in this three-dimensional world can only come by the application of that intelligence which is guided by the motive to bring about a liberation and not merely to make money. And who can have the intensity and devotion to art but the artist himself?

It will be difficult to put this into practice. I have no illusion that it will be easy. But I am capable of all the artist's self-centeredness and his desire "to run now the race cleanly and swiftly," as you say.

Since Ted's and my spiritual separation had already taken place, the going of Doris and Charles meant that the last pillar fell, and very soon Denishawn, in the form we knew it, would be a thing of the past.

It had apparently served its purpose and now came the inevitable upward path for the two individuals who had, like one of the threefold

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planes of Hindu life, been "householders," done their duty as the parents and educators of their children, and made the contribution to their race. We had come together for the purpose of artistic birth; we had achieved that purpose, and now found ourselves once more solitary souls seeking even deeper meanings out of life. We were not allowed to linger in that substitution for life and love which characterizes much of parenthood, when all hopes and all faiths are sunk in the children.

Ted and I could so easily have done this. We could have tended our school and some measure of theatrical productions year after year with an unselfish and deep interest in our children. As they matured and left the home surroundings for other fields we could have built a more permanent home for the Denishawn School and have had greater comfort as the years went on. This would have been the reasonable and inevitable settling of two intelligent people feeling secure within their marriage and proud and occupied with their children.

This, I am sure, was the picture that many of our friends and helpers saw—Miss Ruth and Papa Denishawn, as they affectionately called us—rounding out their years in a full degree of comfort and work well done.

But the living spirit of creative love which governed us both would not let us rest. There must be new marriages, new loves—each according to his need—to rouse the fires of creation that lay within us both.

There were, and are, deep-seated fusions of soul between Ted and me which can never be destroyed, any more than can the essential elements that are called Denishawn, but apparently in the full expressive life between us, centering around the school and the company, a complete spiritual stoppage was about to prevent any further cooperation. The momentum of the institution went on, but that living vision which had been with us since the beginning came to a slow halt, and within two years after the separation with Doris and Charles ceased altogether.

This brings me to the most difficult moment in the entire book. I have no wish, as I have hinted before, to spare myself these moral indictments which belong to me. Nor have I any wish to make out a tepid blamelessness on Ted's part in those final days. But I do wish to make clear that Ted had no more wish to wound me than I had to wound him. It was life itself which was confronting us in one of its most implacable moments.

Again, as in the past, I cannot speak for Ted; I can tell only of those inward causes that lay fitfully in my own nature and made this final separation inevitable. Perhaps, first of all, we should return to a scene fifteen years before at Edgartown when I was forced to make a decision, for in the seeds of that decision was contained the fruit and the tragedy

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of all that had happened since. The fruit was the school and the American ballet, created from the union that followed that decision; the tragedy was the profound and unbridgeable separation that was as clear then to certain areas of my heart as were the visions of joy and productiveness that the dear companionship of Ted would bring. Our final denouement came on one awful night in Denishawn House. In this moment my imagination and my heart were stretched upon a rack.

Up until now I had been a romantic, and in the larger view of life I shall continue to be so all my days, but now the pitiless wisdoms of love were being revealed to me. The opalescent colors of my romantic temperament were leaving the image of my love-god, and it was turning into something I could not recognize. I was made to see and to understand other realms, other motives, other manifestations of love. Apparently my destiny did not intend me to remain in the moonlit, scented courts of my romanticism. There were dark mysteries that were a part of life itself, and these must be revealed to me, court after court, before I could arrive face to face with the great Beloved. I was not allowed to escape even one of these outer courts. And why? Because my understanding must be enlarged. There could no longer be areas of love left obscure and mysterious. I thought that my understanding of the human heart possessed a depth of sympathy and a wideness of vision which would sustain me through any experience, but when I felt the full impact of this irrevocable moment a kind of death fastened itself about me.

I found, as I stood in the ruins of my world, that only the stark simplicities of my faith survived the shock. It is one thing to give a person his objective freedom; it is another thing to free that person from your own binding resentments, fears, and possessiveness. This was the task I set myself in those long months of darkness and confusion that followed this night. If I had not accomplished this the whole spiritual structure of my life would have been washed away.

The three years which followed were a period of blackness, so impenetrable that very little light illuminated my path; and in the darkness, one by one, the other elements that made up my happiness—a career, a home—were lost. For while this inward drama was assuming its final pattern the outward events were merely unloosening the last knots that bound me to my former life.

Ted was still living at Denishawn House, and the school was going on as before, but in February, 1930, he sailed for Germany to make a tour. Writing me from there, he proposed that we introduce that remarkable teacher, and fellow worker of Mary Wigman, Margareta Wall-

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mann. I replied at once and agreed with, I hope, the proper quality of enthusiasm. But I am free to say it took courage. This whole modern movement, which has so occupied the attention of the dance, was beginning to send out its great waves from Germany at that time. I had, of course, heard a great deal about Mary Wigman. While certain instincts of my deepest being rebelled against and resented the qualities which I believed made up her art and the school which proceeded from her and Rudolph Laban, nevertheless I suddenly realized how impossible it would be for any fear or prejudice of mine to stem a tide which could not only roll over me but, in the characteristic way of our American epidemics of culture, flood the country as well. Further than that, remembering the conversations with Doris and Charles, I recalled Doris' statement that the German movement was bringing a splendid new technique to the dance, and at that time she begged us Denishawners to be willing to accept this new but to me repugnant phase of the dance instead of setting our minds against it.

As is evident, we did not heed her plea, and here was another chance for me to prove the statement I had often made: that there was no such thing as old or new, but only good or bad. If this German movement had something of freshness and vigor for the American dance, who was I with my personal prejudices and fears to attempt to resist it?

So, in due time, that most vivid and interesting personality, Margareta Wallmann, came to Denishawn House. I liked her immensely, and watched her classes with unfailing admiration and intense interest. She was kind enough to say that our girls, lined up for her inspection, were very responsive to her teaching. Her own method was so vibrant and infectious that I longed to be one of her pupils; but alas, my Orient-trained body did not take lightly to these new techniques, and it was not until long afterwards, when I put myself under the training of that fine body-builder, Joseph Pilates, that I began to have strength enough to utilize some of these movements.

Within a short time I had an opportunity to see Mary Wigman's performance in New York. I sensed the enthusiasm of her followers, a large concert audience made up principally of dancers, and I felt the impact of a tremendously dominant soul who had, I am sure, suffered the slings and arrows of the outrageous position that Germany found herself in at the conclusion of the war.

She had an unbelievable control over her body, and she moved this instrument of her will through amazing designs in space. But hand in hand with my respect for her physical powers was my conviction that she was a sad, earthbound soul.

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From this performance, apart from its important psychological aspects, was my discovery that the modern dance *did* use what ■ called "stage dancing." I had been assured that the movement did away completely and finally with the lights, the "roses and veils," the properties, the overelaborated dressing, and all the rich palette of color that had been used by the ballet and the Oriental dance for centuries. With Wigman one was reputedly face to face with the abstract dance, stripped to its barest essentials of movement. And yet Wigman and all of her followers appeared in theaters, they danced with lighting effects of some kind, they had rhythmic stimuli, however simple, and they wore costumes. In one of her dances, Mary Wigman even employed a mask. Had she, with her splendid technical equipment, performed the entire evening in a black bathing suit, she would have better supported her austere doctrines.

In a word, I found there was no such thing as the absolute dance, for we are not yet disembodied spirits. It was a question of degree, and not of kind. Sometime later, our young Jack Cole expressed the problem with succinctness and clarity: "When there is such a confusion of the various mediums that the attributes of one sense are being communicated in terms of another, when the color, the smell, the sound of a dance has come to be more important than the movement, then it is time for the dancer to return to first principles." Certainly I have no quarrel with this statement. That there are whole areas of the dance which should be done with a minimum of costuming, properties, and stage accessories there is no doubt. I made my first contribution in my music visualizations when the girls wore simple, neutral costumes which in no wise suggested any one race or period, and used no properties whatever. Also I had believed, and stated, that one phase of the dance should be entirely independent of music, and I made several experiments to this end. On one occasion Doris, in her *Tragica*, did an entirely silent dance. The choreography was Doris', but the conception of a dance without music was based upon my belief that the dance should learn how ■ be independent. This was only a first gesture, and was in no wise conclusive of this phase of an independent art.

But I felt then, and I think the subsequent developments of the modern dance have confirmed this opinion, that these propertyless phases are only one approach. To use the body as one instrument in a great orchestration of the arts is as legitimate and as fine an art as for an individual with a beautiful body to dance in the nude without music or costuming.

All this discussion does not constitute a separation between my love

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of color and lights and music and the austerities of a dance form. For in a long career these objective concerns with the dance have been part and parcel of my own development; and I have said many times that not only has the modern dance added many new words to the vocabulary of movement, but it has provided a superb balance to the so-called artificialities of the ballet and the subtleties of the Orient. My separation from the modern-dance movement was made on purely psychological grounds, and in a rising crescendo of opposition.

I might object, as I did, that the basic, primitive, creative element of all Art was lacking in the apparent sexlessness of these new dancers, whose lines and techniques were largely masculine, representing force, and making no distinction between men's dancing and women's, and thereby negating the balancing forces that produce an object of Art or of Life. But still more important to me was a purely personal withdrawal of myself from the materialistic atmosphere emanating from this new school of thought and action.

An American, stemming from the transcendental school, I have been something of a philosopher, and have eaten of the bread of the prophets all my life. To me, the doctrine of force, the propaganda of hate and struggle, was an alien air which was rejected by my spiritual consciousness as I would reject negation, impermanence, and death. When I protested to some of the younger dancers I was invariably told that the dancer should be a part of her current times: she should be aware of social issues, and should speak her mind through her dancing about those subjects which were nearest her spirit. At first glance this seems an unanswerable argument. The arts have always been instruments of propaganda, and must always remain such. But the challenge that was not answered is, From what kind of mind does this propaganda emanate? Fear, hate, or degeneracy can never in themselves produce an enduring art.

Quite justifiably those youngsters might have answered me in return, "We want, in our dances, to indicate our struggle to combat those forces thrown up against us in this present era." Yes, I would have said, we are living in intense and turbulent times where every last ounce of human wisdom is needed. But I want my beloved art to contribute to the hope and exaltation of humanity by its gifts of rhythm and beauty, and the glory of a final human victory. This is my hope, and not a dictum for the dance; and yet to me it is most precious of all, and I feel it is the fruit of my own years and my supreme gift to the dance. When young artists of today tell me that they must reflect the current times in which they live in order to feel that they are ex-

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pressing a living art, I perfectly agree with this point of view as a working basis for that type of young artist who is content to work from this level and to give of his best from these human and three-dimensional motivations. But unless a creative artist here and there over the fields of our culture listens to the voice of those eternal truths lying outside of time and outside of the current generation in which he lives, the dance will in the end have little to contribute to either its own progress or the culture of his country.

In these latter times we have only begun to tap the spiritual resources of our own Christian religion, which have been darkened and obscured by the long orthodoxy of time. We should interpret the rich beauties of the spirit in a manner which removes us, first as human beings and then as artists, from the limitations of our circumscribed lives, and gives us the vision and the exaltation which brings strength to our hearts and our limbs, and revivifies us for the struggles of life. For the dance must never be an escape but always an identification with the rhythms of hope and attainment.

The beauty of Japan, in the midst of her own misguided battlings, still has her truth to tell. The Eastern tradition of teaching and culture maintains that by the reverence and acceptance of the old forms one draws into himself the very language and material out of which to fashion one's own individual offering. We must not fear that by knowledge and a true culture of mind and body our individuality can be smothered; because the power of true genius will make its voice heard or its image seen in the midst of either an old or a new culture. As a young nation, we still need to drink at the old fountains. Nature and art, in their highest forms, are the only sustenance fit for the growing child.

Above all and beyond all is the immemorial fact that the only thing of any importance is man in his dignity and fullness. In the midst of the battle it is the one unassailable ideal toward which our steps—cultural, social, and religious—are bent, no matter in what school of thought we learn our lessons. When the best for humanity is attained that ideal for man will be standing as true and as vital as God Himself. The ideal dance should have its roots in this attitude of mind; and its branches should spread out to protect the weary ones who might conceivably lose sight of the goal toward which they are pressing.

For my ultimate ideal for the dance—higher than all forms of technique or virtuosity—is the dance of confidence and joy, where inspiration not for the few but for the many is attained, where a childhood, spent learning a technique of suppleness and freedom can evolve into

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a supremely mature self-containment, and provide release of the heart and the mind when the exigencies of the outer life threaten to tear its delicate fibers. I hope that our whole attitude toward the dance will not be shaped around an aesthetic phenomenon, a tense and sometimes wildly exciting spectacle; but that rhythms will be used like a voice, and will be able in simplicity or joy or tender sorrow to merge our deepest loves and hopes. I want the innocent ecstasies of the dance to replace a thousand of our destroying and dangerous amusements, our costly and dangerous sins. In the words of Albert Henry Wiggam, I want the whole of our civilization to look to the arts as an ark to be carried before the people. Perhaps we cannot prophesy what the dance should mean to humanity until we find the center of our spiritual gravity. Then, when our tent is lifted, all its rayed-out lines, which before were in hopeless confusion, will suddenly assume meaning, order, and harmony.

I believe that the period of confusion and adjustment implicit in any young art is nearly over, and that those like myself who lean heavily on emotional and spiritual values, and others who plead for the mellow beauty of the past, may find a working basis with radical youths who are still content with three-dimensional concepts. Between us we can build a rich and enduring American dance, compounded of the fruitful loam of the past, with the fresh seeds planted by youth. For we are witnessing the birth and adolescence of a true American art, the dance, which, with the metaphysical thinking which stemmed from our New England atmosphere, constitutes the only indigenous expression of our native consciousness.

We who create a new world for the dance cannot forever retain it to ourselves. We must give it over to the impact of other minds, and the first of these is—the professional dance critic. He, who did not exist very long ago, is now in the position to translate through his own perception and prejudice or appreciation the subtle dynamics of our new creation. And these critics have their own victories and trials. They have gone a long way from the days of my reporter asking for a little “dope on my life,” or of Mr. George Jean Nathan, who stated that there is no art of the dance: that the dance is merely an excuse to look at a beautiful person’s body. (Mr. Nathan, however, ate his words at the appearance of Mary Wigman.) And part of that way is due to the indefatigable labors of our generalissimo of the critics, Mr. John Martin, of the *New York Times*.

But their lineage is short. They, too, are products of this same creative period. They, as well as the dancer, have little traditional culture to guide them. A critic may have quick visions from season to season of



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the foreign ballets that flit across our theatrical skies; but no tradition prevents him from laying down his personal laws of the Medes and the Persians.

Now, since this is the time for self-examination, I will admit unequivocally that I have had resentments and fears about these critics, whose influence is so potent because it is unchallenged. I have been afraid that dance criticism in America was encouraging those elements which I feel are subversive of the highest ideals of the dance. Undoubtedly this was true of this early, insurgent period; and the critics felt it incumbent upon themselves to lean over backwards in their efforts to balance what they considered the weaknesses of the old regime. They encouraged the reducing of this human body in all its inherent grandeur to the level of a machine, and agreed with the dictum that all movement must be masculine and strong, with no place for the feminine half of the creating universe.

I have lived to see this attitude change, slowly but irresistibly. Yet I still say, with as much passion and vehemence as I can muster, that while the dance as a cultural force in America is young it must be treated with tenderness and foresight. It must not be turned by adverse criticism from the individual path in which its culture or its temperament leads it. Only when the child is strong and sure of himself can the ground be shaken under his feet. I would like to stand on an imaginary summit and say to young dancers, "Remember that the dance is as old as time. Dare to dance your own dance. Do not be bound by the techniques that you have learned, or the criticisms you fear to endure. I call to you not to be mere followers, not to be bound to the sound of a drum; but to speak your own voice, to take your place in the forefront of the dance, and to be the symbol of a new age. In the beginning of my career, had I waited for praise I should never have been born. Had I rested upon the praise that I received I should never have advanced. So when the smoke of battle clears, and your resentment that your noblest efforts have been misconstrued is dissolved, you will find that no real thing is destroyed. There are invisible principles, both in the mind of the artist and in the mind of the public, that are fixed and eternal. In the midst of changing fashions and the unfolding of new energies, certain ageless qualities exist now as they have existed in other forms, in other generations; and will exist through endless tomorrows."

May I be forgiven for not realizing all this so clearly in those dark days of 1930? It must be remembered that as the reputed dean of the American dance, a creative artist of some distinction, and, since the

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death of Isadora, the sole surviving instigator of this new epoch, I was suffering a complete eclipse. The intelligentsia of the dance made it appear that my offering was not only in the discard, but had been, in retrospect, largely composed of theatrical tricks.

In these last years at Denishawn House I felt like someone marooned on a desert island, without help in sight. In this spiritually empty house I was fighting, sometimes jealously, sometimes despairingly, to retain something of my own confidence in the value and power of my destiny. I remember Lea Penman, a dear actress friend, telling me one day that when the new musicians came in—the Debussys and Ravels and Stravinskys—a few of the old teachers and artists of the classics committed suicide. They saw no hope of getting into step with what they regarded as an oncoming ruthless army of young iconoclasts. "But," said she, "look at the programs today, and take courage. Not that there are no Debussys and Ravels and Stravinskys; but when the smoke of the fears had cleared we found the classics calmly going on their way, side by side with the new ideas."

For me it has been a long and painful struggle. I have had to open my sympathies and enlarge my visions a hundred times since those early days. Finally I had to drop, clearly and without compromise, those personal and impersonal resentments toward the movement as a whole. But not until some years later did I go up to Bennington College, that stronghold of the modern dance. Then I found that when we face our fears they change into friendly beings who help us on our way. Mary Jo Shelley and Martha and Charles and John Martin, and countless students who had touched the life of Denishawn at some period, greeted me with friendliness, and an appreciation far beyond what my self-incrusted fears had imagined. I spent three extraordinary days watching Louis Horst in his classes, and observing Martha's strict but beneficial techniques. I had the joy of seeing one of Hanya Holm's free, lovely groups, and admired an enchanting dance of Anna Sokolow. But more than anything, I saw the emergence out of hatred propaganda and political gloom into beautiful, although austere, concepts of American life.

And I have had still further illumination when at the time of writing this section of my book I talked with Doris, and saw again the clear flame of her spirit. Doris feels that her dance is an art concerned with human values. "It upholds only those things which hold for harmony and opposes all courses inimicable to those values." To her "this new dance of action comes inevitably from those people who had to subdue a continent, to make a thousand paths through forest and plain,

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to conquer the mountains and eventually to raise up towers of steel and glass. The American dance is born of this new world, new life and new vigor." She feels that "during the recent insurgence of art much of the work produced was purely negative, and that some affirmation should be made." Her trilogy, composed of *New Dance*, *With My Red Fires*, and *Theater Piece*, was conceived under such circumstances as these. As I listened to Doris I felt a curious kind of comfort in receiving her point of view, and in realizing how clear and positive her vision is; and I was proud that I had been able in some measure to release her years ago into so much dominion and power.

From Charles came much the same words: a call to that life which surrounds us, and not to what he regards as fantasy and romance. A desire that artists be mouthpieces of life's expression; to keep their mode of action fresh and vital, and to remove the dance from the realms of pleasant entertainment into vibrant and genuine identification with our own world.

Simultaneously I saw Martha's newest work, *An American Document*, and felt a lift in my heart that here was an effort to restate some of our native truths, and feel some of the pulse of a country whose roots are in a love of freedom. Whatever faults of construction or execution there might be is beside the point. Her courage and farsightedness in choosing a theme like this set her forth again as one of the younger prophets of this age—one who is using the language of the dance with a wide intelligence, a sensitive awareness of many undertones in our national culture, and an austere love of beauty, which delights me when that austerity is not carried into fields where it does not belong. I can only hope that sometime Martha will allow herself to depart long enough from her austerities to express in her own rhythms not only the sweetness of her heart, but the contrast to the extreme and geometric language that has become identified with her.

Everywhere I see signs not only of public response to the dance, but of the broadening of the share of dance in education, and its integrations with the whole of our culture. Compared with thirty years ago encouraging signs are everywhere, and one's hopes for the dancer's eventual place in the sun are recharged every day.

Of course the stadium concerts still kept us busy a good part of the year, preparing, rehearsing, and then presenting them each summer. In 1929 I had danced with Ted in his *Jurgen*, an adaptation from James Branch Cabell's book, with music by Deems Taylor. Taylor came up to the rehearsals, a mellow, enthusiastic person whom we all liked im-

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mediately and doubly appreciated because we could not help remembering the beautiful appreciation of the Denishawns he had written some years before.

Ted worked hard to express the mood of his music as well as the action of the story, and the ballet was thoroughly satisfying to everyone.

In 1930, after his return from Germany, we danced our fourth Stadium season, and included this time my *Angkor Vat* ballet, for which Cleon Throckmorton designed the sets and Lester Shafer made the headdresses. Sol had composed the music for this, and besides providing a splendid, sustaining structure of form and rhythm had written some lovely music of mysterious color, deeply suggestive of the East. His magnificent overture, his love duet, the little ballet before the king, the stunning music for the war fought on the backs of elephants by the dancers, made an intrinsically beautiful composition. On the same program Ada's enchanting *De Lachau Waltz* was done by a group with scarfs under colored lights. It was brilliantly executed and the audience loved it. This composition, which we had used with piano for many years, grew in dynamic richness when transcribed for the orchestra, and when the rehearsal of the *Waltz* was over even the orchestra men cheered. On the same program was my first big metaphysical ballet called *The Lamp*. This arose from one of my nights spent alone in the big studio, when a poem of death and transfiguration welled up in my mind. I had found in *Les Préludes* of Liszt the inspiring music for this theme. Ted danced the symbolic figures of Death and Life; the costuming and groupings were inspired by the drawings of William Blake. Marion Chace, Lester's wife, did a beautiful bit which stood out in the second movement, and all the Denishawn ensemble with Anna, Klarna, Jack Cole, Arthur Moore, Campbell Griggs, and Lester Shafer were on hand for the finale.

John Erskine came on the dress-rehearsal night. Sensing the struggle we were putting up to maintain the values of Denishawn House, he asked me to come down and talk to him and see if some financial structure could not be put under its tottering walls. He made a number of suggestions, which I am sure he would have carried through had other circumstances allowed us to profit by his enthusiasm. His personality, which one finds in his brilliantly satiric books, is equally present in a tête-à-tête interview, when his observations on life and individuals are packed with the same kind of dry wit and charm.

Partly for money, going where it briefly showed itself, and partly to escape the emotional strain that was making my life at Denishawn intolerable, I went on occasional journeys out of the school. Since the

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depression, managers could not give us the guarantees we needed, and the Denishawn company as such had practically fallen to pieces. After the death of our beloved Daniel Mayer we felt an emptiness that was not easily filled. But Edward Lowrey, who had been a part of the Mayer office, came into the vacancy quietly and has remained until now a staunch friend and skillful manager. Under his supervision I filled a number of appearances of various kinds. At a particularly low and desperate moment he arranged engagements in California, most notably an appearance at the Figueroa Playhouse. Later I danced with the Hollywood Community Chorus, one of the few occasions that roused me out of the black pit into which I had sunk. I danced to the accompaniment of two thousand voices, led with tremendous gusto by Kerkoffer, their beloved leader. I did *Swanee River* and *The Lost Chord*, and the ending, with the swelling volume of voices, was so moving that I ran sobbing off the stage while the audience cheered and cheered.

Of course I saw Mother in Long Beach. She was well and cheerful and very glad to have me with her. As we stood around her chair, some friends listening to my vivid tales of Oriental potentates told at Calkins' request for the benefit of a wide-eyed junior, she suddenly broke into my tale and said, "Seeing you people standing in the shadow of the door makes me think that death will be like that. That we will pass from this room we call life to that other place that will probably prove quite as interesting as this." Then she waved me to go on with my story.

I arranged to give a small concert for her, and others who might like to come, in a club near by. She was very happy at the thought of seeing me dance again, and as I saw her arrayed in her white shawl, her hair beautifully dressed by Calkins, it took me back to the old days, and I danced my best, as she would have expected her Ruthie to do. I did one or two of her favorites, like the *Cobra* and the *Incense*, and some of the ones she had never seen. She was cautious in her praise afterwards, and made one or two acute suggestions about make-up, and stated firmly that in one dance the music was too fast. Blessed Mother. When I was with her the past fifteen years fell away.

I had read the poems and the writings of Krishnamurti, that young Indian sage, but I had never heard him speak. So I went up to the Theosophical Society's new headquarters in the Ojai Valley, that magic spot between two California mountains. Under the intense blue sky, with the rustle of the huge outspreading branches, I listened to a young Indian god speak of life. He stood between two trees, and his audience sat on the ground before him. The long rays of the sun streamed through the branches, the birds were singing, and he said, "Examine

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yourselves. Come to a certainty of purpose. Set aside everything else. Fear is born from seeking comfort." He had the profile of a god, the speech and manners of an Oxford graduate, and the boyish charm of a lad of seventeen. His bodily movements were light and effortless. He had a curious spiritual independence, which manifested itself in his absorption with his words and in his clipped and nervous manner, that made few concessions to the sentimentalities and archaic phraseology of religion. I am afraid he shocked a good portion of his audience out of their complacency.

Later I had the joy of dancing without music to a number of his poems under those same spreading trees.

From time to time one sees the old longing for drama surge up in me, and when Albert Herter asked me to play the lead in his *The Gift of Eternal Life* at the Lobar Theater in Santa Barbara, I leaped half-way across the state to say yes. Albert is one of my choicest and most delightful friends. I do not remember the moment when I first met him. I know that for years he has been a kind of artistic guardian angel who at odd moments sends a little line, potent with new possibilities of something delightful, or appears as a reassuring voice over the telephone at a time when I particularly need such a voice. So that all during these years it would be hard for me to imagine my art life without Albert Herter somewhere in the offing.

I cannot accurately give his art background. He rarely talks of his own doings, but I know that he is—heaven help us—what is called a society painter. He does lovely ladies, who cherish his charming portraits, but what I suspect interests him still more are the murals that he has painted here and there over the country. Some of his loveliest are in the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco and in the new library at Los Angeles. I have had the distinction of being painted by him as Kwannon. His letters to his friends are witty, delightful scriptures of gossip and philosophy.

This play, about which he was so enthusiastic, was laid in ancient Persia. I was able to be alluring and fatal in the first two acts, and lovely and repentant in the last act. Albert himself played the mellow old king who tries to give the golden pomegranate of eternal life to various members of his court. But none of them are worthy of it or wish to possess it, and so it is returned to him in the last poignantly lovely scene.

I was a pretty bad mixture of Mrs. Leslie Carter, Mrs. Fiske, bits of Oriental acting and a little Ruth St. Denis. It was artistic hash, but I

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put it over with wim and vigor and the audience appeared to be delighted.

Having listened to my frequent, but somewhat incoherent descriptions of my temple ideas, my ballet of the States, and other grandiose schemes that were thronging my mind, Mrs. Herter very charmingly gave a dinner at El Mirasol, that lovely private hotel which she had decorated with great skill. At this dinner, with Leopold Stokowski on my right, and a member of the faculty of the University of California on my left, I was encouraged to hold forth, and I availed myself without stint. Stokowski proved interested. And I felt that many of his ideas for American culture embraced some of my hopes for the dance. It was an enchanting evening, and I was very grateful to Mrs. Herter for this gesture.

While I was in the kingdom of motion pictures I made what was called a Paramount Pictorial. This had been arranged by the Kellermanns, Maurice and Germaine, artists in photography who believed that a few of my dances should be preserved. I did fragments of my *Nautch* and *Javanese*, and the *Japanese Flower Arrangement*. Wells arranged the music for the little orchestra and all the cameramen took a real interest in lighting it superbly. Although it is fragmentary, it is, at the moment, my only piece of professional film with sound that exists and it had a wide distribution over the country. Returning to New York, I found the school exactly as it had been before, the surface seemingly untouched by the underswell. I took my place in it again, and for a little while resumed classes, but always the tendrils of my heart and mind were reaching out for that substance that would shape my new life.

Gradually, almost imperceptibly, it began to form itself out of the stuff of all my spiritual adventures and meditations.

One day, some time before, on tour, weary with one-night stands, I had told Pearl I would not go out to dinner but would lie down in my dressing room till the evening performance. When I had finished the supper Pearl had sent in to me she came to remove the tray, put out the lights, and close the door. I was lying out on the couch that was always placed in my dressing room and, with hands clasped behind my head, was in that half-wakeful, half-sleeping state which is so often the perfect condition for creative thought. For some moments, feeling the silence of the theater, I remained in a state of quivering expectancy. Suddenly, looming like a great pearl—like a new Taj Mahal—against the dark shadows of my mind, was a temple. I realized at once this temple was the symbol and the focusing point of my whole dancing

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life. Of course the idea of temple dancing had been the line of my destiny from the first, and hundreds of fragmentary ideas or definite ballets, which dealt not only with racial religions but with a more universal dance of worship, had thronged my mind. But not until this moment had the single concept dawned upon me—this cathedral of the future wherein all the arts, as well as the dance, would be summoned from the ends of the earth to become the instruments of spiritual beauty.

As this idea glowed in my mind I rose, switched on the light, and began to write in my journal. I sensed that here was the first letter of a new word, the faint dawn of my new day.

As the tour continued, the new idea was constantly in my thoughts. On subsequent days a completer concept began to unfold. I asked myself the question that had been in my mind for years, If the consciousness of our union with God is not a joyous, living experience, surely it is not genuine? If it is a joyous and exultant experience we will want to express it by speech, by writing, and by singing. But why stop there? Can we not move our whole bodies in a rhythmic movement that is harmonious and life-enhancing? Is there any reason why we should not dance our truth?

To answer this question meant enlarging my conception to take in all art and all manners of expression, all techniques of art. And yet no art would bring value to this temple idea unless it surrendered itself to the meaning of life.

As the idea began to unfold, the temple became a dynamic and not a static concept. It was not a fixed idea of a building and some rituals, that however beautiful and valuable could only be interpreted and copied, but it was to become a living principle which deepened as every year went by and provided within the frame of the temple some answer to the vital needs of humanity.

The first aspect of the temple was a focal point for all phases of my own temple dances, where they might be gathered together under one noncommercial roof—for possible temple dances by others, and for the dance as an instrument to teach the youth of America a profounder respect for our debt to the past through a series of ballets, dealing with the ancient as well as the modern races.

These dances would be done in a beautiful temple building, on an altar-stage, large enough to permit all manner of sacred ballets, in an auditorium with no pillars so that the line of vision would be perfect. Studios and classrooms would be above the auditorium, and galleries for the exhibition of graphic arts. At all times I described it as a place



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which had the motivations of the church with the instrumentation of the stage.

The whole concept signified a synthesis of the arts and religion. Obviously the temple building was the product of architecture. Music would of course fill the great spaces of the auditorium, poetry would be the very core and center of our productions, and drama would logically develop from the poetry. Painting would not be a separate art of religious expression but would cooperate in a hundred effects for the temple itself. Sculpture would be incorporated into the decorations and would also be an inspiration for the dance. The art of lighting would be raised to a great height, and the adaptive arts of interior decoration would be utilized throughout the entire project. God should be honored, I believed, not with old and decaying forms but with the full compliment of those arts and sciences which are daily being unfolded by artists and inventors.

This would be religious art in its highest sense; for the instrumentation of tone and color, of form and rhythm would be employed to release the spiritual consciousness of man into terms of beauty, and would not limit his stimulus to any one sect or any one religion, but make it the expression of his total spiritual awareness. We would have a school of wisdom, where the students would acquire a knowledge of all the laws of seers and prophets and learn the application of the emotional and scientific laws in artistic and social life. Part of this school of wisdom would be to evolve better clothes, better houses, better ways of amusement, and, most important, a better understanding of the value of the human body, its hygiene, and its development toward a perfect state.

Of course the most important living elements of this whole concept were the celebrants of this temple. Since the language of the temple was to be the language of art in its totality the body became the beginning and final instrument of expression. Those who believed that life was a great moving ritual from birth to death were to be priests who held themselves in readiness to translate and interpret in rhythm, tone, color, and form that body of truth which was capable of being given in terms of art. They were to keep always in mind that the pageants and productions, the recitals and services of the temple, were intended to be illustrations of new principles for life, and not to be an end in themselves.

Naturally I asked myself the question that was to be asked me many times in the future, How would the activities of this temple affect the mass of people everywhere? Truly the passing errors and vulgarities of humanity will, like the poor, be always with us. The children of this world will amuse themselves in their own way, but every hour souls are born into the world who have a natural nostalgia for the unearthly





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beauty of the spirit and to them this ideal, set forth in the understandable language of our three-dimensional world, would be food and shelter for their spiritual longings.

I could see replicas of the temple in simpler forms spreading to all cities and towns of the country, beginning with the simple cell of a community temple—a single studio—for a mere handful of students and celebrants, and gradually unfolding, as is the organic law of life, into more complex forms. In the immediate future, however, I saw many churches opening their doors hospitably to this hitherto unrelated art, the dance. My concept of these new forms of worship, which would include rhythmic movements in our church services, demanded a new and vital expression that would bring humanity into a closer and more harmonious relationship with the One who created our bodies as well as our souls. In this mechanical age I also believed that great motion pictures would carry a radiant manifestation of these rituals, so that they would be spread over the world.

That the former was not as impracticable as it may sound was proven several years later when in the Park Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York I gave before the altar a simple and moving plastique of the Psalms and, with my rhythmic group, took a harmonious part in our orthodox service.

The first expressions of the idea were very humble and preparatory. When I began to talk to Sol about rousing interest in this new idea, he said, "Why don't you invite some people in who like to talk about religious or philosophic ideas. No party—just talk."

This prospect stimulated me so much that one night I invited a handful of friends. I began by telling them about the little esoteric meetings we had had on tour, and suggested that others might like to come and discuss what lay deepest in their hearts. A Mr. Whitehead from Boston was, I think, the only outsider this first time. All the others were members of the household. I announced at the beginning that all vague discussions of plays and books and gossiping doings were out of order. These meetings were to be for the purpose of speaking one's mind and bringing as offering those spiritual truths which he believed had sustained him and would help us. I think I gave out some faint theme that started us talking.

At first we sat up more or less primly on the couches and chairs and began our discussions in measured tones. But soon Mr. Whitehead offered a challenge, possibly about idolatry, and I remembered what Keyserling had said in defense of idolatry. In turn Sol had some-

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thing to add about his old Jewish traditions, and very soon the meeting was on.

Some latecomer started the floor conference by having no chair to sit on, and presently the whole meeting had entirely deserted the chairs and couches.

There was no rancor in the arguments; it was all friendly and spirited and the evening was gone before we knew it. Other friends downtown heard of these little meetings and began to drift in. And then one evening, stimulated by the responsiveness of those who were present, I began ■ talk about my temple. The students in particular listened with eager wonder to this new concept of the dance. It became linked immediately with some element of their spiritual life. The older people began to see it as a release into some kind of action for their nonsectarian religious life.

These small meetings were destined to lead out ahead of all other things in my life. One evening shortly after I had spoken of my concept of the temple we left the room upstairs and went down into the big studio, having issued invitations to many more people than my room could have accommodated. These new meetings were the preliminaries to the actual services which later developed a certain entity of their own.

The outer form of these services was very simple. We put our little audience-congregation at the end of the room near the big window. At the other end, against the long green curtains, we laid out a plain gray rug. Four wrought-iron candlesticks with tall cathedral candles and two huge brass vases of flowers formed the altar. The girls, generally about half a dozen of them, came in dressed in long simple robes, medieval in feeling, with no ornaments, and seated themselves on either side of the rug. Then Wells entered and went to the piano. After a little preliminary music he played something joyous and rhythmical and I appeared in a long white gown and bowed in Oriental fashion to the congregation.

There was always an air of faint excitement on the audience's part by this time. Very few of them, in the early days, knew what to expect. Casual friends who had been invited for the evening wondered quite openly what it was all about. Here was the air of a church, and yet it obviously was not a church. I hoped it was a bit intriguing. I intended it to be. After a few minutes I started speaking on some subject nearest my thoughts, and I spoke about it in a semiphilosophical, semireligious way. Toward the end of the meeting the focus was directed on the matter of deepest importance—the utilization of the dance and the other arts as a new instrumentation of religious expression.

I always told our friends that these evenings were purely experimental

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and that I could not promise they would not be puzzled. Nor would I promise that a masterpiece of art would be conjured up before them, but I dared to believe that they would not be bored and that they would have the feeling of taking part in a new religious and artistic movement.

Sometimes I would improvise to the spontaneous themes that Wells gave me. Then later I experimented, before them all, with the full rhythmic choir, as these dance-celebrants grew to be called. One of our most successful ventures was a study of the three planes of prayer reflected in bodily action. A more ambitious evening saw the inception of a work which turned out so successfully that we did it at one of Edgar White Burrill's vesper evenings at Town Hall. This dance or plastique was called *Unity*. It expressed through the group movements the theme of spiritual confusion and darkness, when the eyes have been turned away from the light and we grope and stumble toward each other but miss constantly those contacts which the heart so desperately seeks. Only in a moment of illumination are the eyes of one of the celebrants opened to see that he is not alone and then he draws the others with him into a conscious circle of harmonious unity.

Probably our most effective evening was when my good friend Mr. Das Gupta of the Fellowship of Faiths, who had long been interested in the temple idea, brought some friends to Denishawn House and I prepared three short rituals. The first was for the Buddha, which we performed before the lovely golden figure which Buzz had had made for me in Japan and which, during all the days of the great studio, shed his benign presence from the corner between the windows. With candles lighting his altar, the choir made a simple but touching ceremony of adoration to this timeless figure of the nirvanic calm. The next was a colorful ritual — the Brahman goddess Saraswati whom Anna beautifully impersonated, standing on a pedestal wearing a warm red sari with crown and ornaments and holding the vina on her shoulder in a characteristic attitude of the goddess. The girls circled around her, offering flowers and incense. My last was a ritual to Mary, in which I impersonated the White Madonna while the girls performed a lovely candle plastique and then, with almost the gay reverence of childhood, brought, like the Tumbler of Our Lady, their individual offerings of youth and dancing.

These meetings were held for more than two years. The audiences grew steadily. It became the central point of interest for the students and would undoubtedly have developed even further had not the clouds of debt and other inharmonies gathered and fallen in such torrents about me.

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On one occasion I had the opportunity to carry a portion of the temple service outside the walls of Denishawn when that redoubtable fighter for an enlarged church worship, Dr. Norman Guthrie of Saint-Mark's-in-the-Bowery, asked me to bring my *Gold Madonna* to the lovely altar of his church. I danced it to music composed by Sol. Mr. Goldsworthy, the organist, who all these years had supported the doctor's ideas as Wells had mine, took this composition by Sol and transcribed it into organ literature. At the same time he did a charming thing which pleased my artistic and literary vanity. He took one of my praise poems and arranged it to be sung by the church choir.

Dr. Guthrie's contribution toward the mobilization of the arts for religion deserves more space than I can give him here. He is a true pioneer, a scholar, and an agitator for beauty. Since the doctor and I are two supreme egotists I doubt if we would have been able to collaborate harmoniously, but I will always remain one of his warmest admirers. I feel strongly that the rich store of enthusiasm and the use of the new liturgical symbolism and the forming of new rituals, all of which were suggested by Dr. Guthrie at Saint-Mark's, should be carried on. He and his daughter Phoebe developed his ideas, with little financial support and a deplorably small personnel, and Phoebe alone produced some lovely things as illustration of her father's radical theories.

I shall never forget one appealing and beautiful memorial that he gave to Anna Pavlova after her death. He invited Fokine and Dr. Genthe and me to bring our tribute to this great artist who had caught up the imagination of thousands into visions of unearthly beauty. Fokine gave touching memories of his intimate work with her as the choreographer of some of her most unforgettable ballets. Dr. Genthe bewailed the fact that there were no adequate movies of an artist of whom neither this nor succeeding generations will see the like again. This struck at my heart forcefully, for I had long believed it a disgrace that there were no proper records of Isadora or Nijinski, or those who have taken their fragile and highly personal art with them.

Another who often listened to my not too definite but nevertheless enthusiastic description of the whole temple idea and opened up to me a rich store of music was Lazar Saminsky. He is the musical leader and the inspiration of the Jewish Temple Emanu-El on Fifth Avenue. He had also founded and directed a society for the furtherance of rare music, called the New York Polyhymnia. He asked me if I would be interested to do the choreography for some of his exceptional music. I delightedly agreed to cooperate and in my long years of pioneering in the dance I have never been more stimulated than on the two occasions

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I was able to work with Mr. Saminsky. On the first program of the Polyhymnia we had not only the inspired conducting of Mr. Saminsky himself but the assistance of the Emanu-El Choir and the Pan-American Symphonic Ensemble. This very unusual program contained old and new American chorals, two ballets from ancient Greek literature; *A Page from Euripides*, composed by Michel Gniessin, which was the finale from a longer work *The Phoenician Maiden*; and *A Page from Homer* by Evelyn Berckman. I did the choreography for both of these and then we listened to a cantata called *The Daughter of Jephthah* by Saminsky himself. It was a richly beautiful composition which Klarna Pinska, who was dancing with me in the ballets, and I longed sometime to put into visible form.

To my great joy I was asked once by Mr. Saminsky to sit with him in the great choir loft of the Temple Emanu-El at a rehearsal, and all evening I was torn between admiration and envy, for I longed for such a chorus to support my choreographic dreams of Old Testament scenes.

Not only did Lazar Saminsky open to me the treasures of Hebrew music, but I also spent many beautiful hours with that mellow and delightful man, Kurt Schindler, who believed, as I did, that the old Jewish religious music should be danced in new and expressive ways.

Klarna Pinska, who felt the same profound identification with the music of her race as these older musicians, held a unique position in this period of Denishawn. Years before, in Canada, a little girl of about thirteen came around after the matinee. She wore a white dress, tied about her middle and not spotlessly clean. I noticed her hanging on the edge of the crowd backstage and she looked so defenseless and eager that I said, "What do you want?" She answered with the passionate earnestness that so often characterizes the Jewish temperament, "I wanna dance." She spoke in a husky voice and her eyes were beseeching.

She was a disturbing little figure. I did not know what to do with her. We could not take her with us on tour, since she was untrained. But I said something to the effect that if she did appear by some magic on the steps of Denishawn, thousands of miles away in Los Angeles, we would give her lessons. I had no expectation of ever seeing her again, but I thought about her for days afterwards. Here was talent and no money, and I remembered with resentment all the hours that I had taught girls with money and no talent. Well, two or three years passed, and then one day we opened the door and there stood Klarna Pinska, her small belongings in a battered suitcase, her little suit badly mussed, but the same indomitable courage in her eyes and the same disturbingly husky voice. She had hitch-hiked, she had waited on tables, she had



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spent a few weeks in a library and then quit because she must be on her pilgrimage, and after several months of struggle she finally reached Denishawn.

A great affection has always existed between Klarna and me. We have had many dreams together. Someday we both hope she will evolve new interpretations of her own ancient cultures and find rhythmic idioms to express the emotions of her own soul and her race.

Klarna worked in and around Denishawn for years. She grew to be a splendid teacher; she helped to find ways of making my Oriental techniques more clear-cut. She formed classes of Jewish children in the neighborhood apartment houses, and as a final climax of her service, both to Denishawn and her neighborhood children, she went through the grueling and tedious discipline of forming a children's synchoric orchestra, which after months of her patient training had the honor of dancing with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra before thousands of patrons in the Lewisohn Stadium in 1931.

In this manner my synchoric came at last to partial visibility. The children had been untrained. They came from working people's apartments; they ranged in years from seven to thirteen, and most of them had heard little classic music. But to our amazement they responded, to a child, to the dynamic rise and fall, the color, the classic measures of the Schubert *Unfinished*. Klarna's only difficulty was to discipline this vigorous group personally. At last they began to see the reason for quiet between the actual moments of dancing. Klarna was patient but firm, and several of the children did remarkable work. Two little boys about eight years old impersonated the drums. To see them wait patiently through the long measures until their moment came when, with unerring timing, they brought down their arms on exactly the right note never failed to delight and amuse us and the audiences.

On the day of rehearsal these streams of youngsters, pouring onto the stage, were almost on the verge of hysteria, and yet when they took their places in the pattern which was meant to parallel the orchestra they were perfectly controlled. The beautiful, somber sound of the first bars came, and the little group of cellos moved with low, relaxed movements; then the violins entered, their slender young bodies vibrating to the strains; later a little group of three flutes had the stage to themselves for a moment, and in the great final chords all the children moved together. Hans Lange conducted them with great sensitivity and an attitude of protection, and when he laid down his baton the men of the Philharmonic tapped on their stands. Klarna's assistant in all these struggles with the synchoric was our dear Anna Matlin, a splendid pian-

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ist and a loyal friend. Anna had woven herself and her fine musicianship into the life of Denishawn.

A short time later Klarna repeated the synchoric under interesting educational auspices at the DeWitt Clinton High School, where Hans Lange conducted a large student orchestra from the school. I invited Ernest Schelling to see the synchoric, and he wrote me a touching and appreciative letter the next day. In the future I would like to carry on this artistic and educational experiment with both child and adult groups. What Bruno Ussher sensed in California, and what Hans Lange supported with the Philharmonic, was the effort to counterbalance the waves of jazz with which the average child is bombarded daily, to interest him in classical music by the simple business of becoming bodily related to the music.

The experiment, we discovered, was usually successful, and this success called for a pressure more continuous than we could apply.

These days, although not filled with enterprises that oiled the gears of Denishawn, were at least rich in such experiments, as well as in artistic or philosophical adventures.

Lucile Marsh at the Roerich Museum arranged a series of dance evenings, and I prepared a program that pleased me in every way. I gave religious studies of the East and West, *White Jade*, the *Incense*, the *Yogi*, *Kwannon*, *The Invocation to the Buddha*, and the plastique of the *Madonna*. I felt that I was not only dancing within the four walls of the Roerich Society, but also dancing with its blessings and spiritual cooperation.

A little further afield, but having a peculiar flavor of its own, was an evening in Philadelphia when I was the guest of that splendid muralist and author, Violet Oakley, who was the first woman to receive the gold medal of the Architectural League for mural decorations. At my suggestion she invited many of the leading artists of the city for an evening of sketching.

I had noticed the beautiful draperies in her murals, and it occurred to me that the graphic arts might gain immeasurably if artists could work with the assistance of those dancers who possessed not only trained bodies but a familiarity with drapery and a sense of color and design in relation to the human figure. I suppose I was hoping for a return to the Tanagra period, when there was this same interrelation between the arts.

So I offered to pose in a number of different draperies, and asked, by way of remuneration, a sketch from each artist. Violet Oakley enthusiastically agreed and placed her beautiful studio at my disposal for the

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evening. As I was putting on my costumes I heard the artists arriving. Presently Miss Oakley said everyone had come, and as I went up a narrow flight of stairs I was greeted by a distinguished assembly of artists, each seated in a comfortable chair with a sketching pad in front of him. There was Yarnell Abbott, Edward Warwick and Jessie Wilcox Smith, Edith Emerson, and some ten or fifteen more. Candles were lighted over the studio, which was almost as large as the whole of Denishawn House and contained many of Violet Oakley's murals on the walls.

Letitia Radcliffe Harris, a composer of songs, sat down at the piano and played, so that when I grew tired of the pose I could dance a little. Many fine sketches were made, a few of which I retain today, and several of the artists were kind enough to say that they had found new values in the drapery and unexpected revelations of body control which, of course, their models could not give them.

A little later, under Miss Oakley's hospitable roof, I met the poet Tagore for the first time. He was visiting Philadelphia, rousing interest in his school, and she with her accustomed graciousness invited a number of people to meet him. I sat in the audience and heard him make a brief address, and then thanked him for the joy his poems had given me. Later we shared a unique evening when we combined in a performance at the Broadway Theater in New York.

Tagore was full of his country's wrongs and chanted one of his poems to the motherland, while a group of my children, dressed in little saris and bearing flowers, covered him with the traditional garlands and threw petals at his feet. As he sat on a cathedral chair in the center of the stage, looking like a serene sage with his distinguished head and long, prophetic beard, surrounded by the children in pale violet saris, he made an unforgettable picture. Before the performance was over, with Will Durant and others watching from the boxes, I did a number of my Indian dances as tribute to the genius of this man who had so successfully and exquisitely interpreted the spirit of Indian poetry and philosophy into such marvelous English.

It is continually amazing to me that one unsolved problem can continue to live its own solitary life, continue to cry its own pain while the rest of life goes on in sincerity and beauty. Never for one moment during all these months was my terrific loneliness, my dark wound, healed. It searched out food for its hunger, it drew to itself fragmentary answers which were no answers, it wept in the night, and it persistently looked forward through the mists of its own tears to that hidden image of perfected love, which dwelt, even now, somewhere in the sanctuary.

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Ted still lived in Denishawn House, but his activities had separated almost entirely from mine. Those near and dear to us understood many things with great loving-kindness. Our rupture was almost never discussed in my hearing, though I am sure that, in the quiet of many a studio, pupils wondered and probably expressed their own opinions ■ to what had really happened. I had the horrible experience of being questioned by reporters from the tabloids who, on two occasions, came up to Denishawn House, and refusing to take "No" for an answer, invaded my house to ask whether I was divorced or not, and if so why. To be sure, Ted was still in and about and we were seen in friendliness, but nevertheless these sleuths of gossip knew that a separation of sorts had occurred and they were determined to get an expression from me.

One columnist, being thwarted of the true facts, went so far as to say that the Denishawn rift had been made legal. Which was not true then and never has been.

When I look back at the emotional confusions of this period, existing under the activities of both the school and the productions, I can only wonder that we came out of them in as clear a manner as we did. There is a marvelous line in one of Mrs. Eddy's writings, "When these things cease to bless they will cease to occur." Why this peculiar chastening of my spirit should have been sent me at this time, why all my emotional stabilities were taken from under me, I do not know. When Ted went to Germany for the second time and on his return did not again live at Denishawn House, although still maintaining classes there, my mind accepted this final severance as inevitable, but my heart went through its own Gethsemane.

Upon his return his principal interest was his production of *Job*, which he finally produced at the Stadium. The music by Vaughan Williams, the English composer, intrigued him when he first heard it and, turning to the additional stimulation of William Blake, he created some unforgettable scenes. He had a number of boys in his company who had been trained at Denishawn, and that charming technician and delightful dancer, Paul Haakon, appeared as guest artist.

In this summer of 1931 Ted and I danced together for the last time. I had no feelings of sentimental despair. Some seasons before the oak fell, its heart had been eaten away.

The next three years were increasingly barren, with a strange gray aridity and no real sense of substance, either of money or of love or of beauty. I clutched at the small favors of life as they swung for a moment into my orbits, wistful little moments of romantic charm in the patio, on the roof, little moments of family happiness in the kitchen

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with Jim and Bena, our Italian cook and his wife, who had taken the place of our dear Strattons. It was as though I had dropped from the summits of life into valleys where there was no verdure, and only a kind of wavering path ahead. During this whole unhappy period one down-town friend stood out—Grace Arons of the old *Dance* magazine. And Grace found many ways to lighten the gloom of my memory-laden days.

I shall never forget the tenderness of such friends at this period. Many an afternoon when the clouds hung heavy and I would throw myself wearily on my bed my little Edna Guy would softly bring the Bible and, crouching down by my side, find some lovely page from the Psalms, and the beautiful lines, half-chanted, half-spoken, would gradually lull me to sleep. It was then I called her my little black prophetess as she called me her white prophetess.

Edna and I had come into each other's lives a number of years before, when, after a matinee downtown, an usher had brought me a note written in a semipoetic manner that caught my attention. It was signed, "Edna Guy, Colored Girl." She said that she and her mother were in the gallery and would I receive them after the matinee. I sent word by the usher that I would be delighted to have them both come back. I saw them standing on the outskirts of the crowd that was busily getting autographs, and went over to where they were, and I remember looking into the loveliest pair of dark eyes in a colored face that I had ever seen. Little Edna stood shyly beside her mother, who was a kind of black madonna with exquisite, regular features. Edna began to tell me of her great longing to dance, and immediately the three of us were sympathetic and of one accord. From that day until now I have been her white mama. She lived at Denishawn House. She made tours with me, helping me behind stage while we had long discussions of literature and poetry and the beloved dance.

Edna struggled with many difficulties within herself and in her outward life. She could not fit in with the *Shuffle Along* gaieties and there was only a small group in Harlem interested in the classic dance. However, she had her own little group of children and did some lovely things with them. I helped her with some Oriental dances that suited her well, and when we went to California introduced her to Albert Herter. To her joy he suggested that she dance in the bazaar scene of *The Gift of Eternal Life*, which she did with charm and skill.

There were hours when my soul was too weary and timid and afraid to bear the great shadowy spaces of the studio. Then in other hours, sometimes just before dawn, being aroused by some inner conflict, or

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better still by some new image in my brain, I would go softly down the stairs, open the doors of the studio, and move ■ the very center of the room. I would let the peace and quiet and the grave beauty of the green hangings and the vague outlines of the paintings on the wall reassure me, with a kind of cool comfort, that beauty still existed. I wrote the poem of "The Lamp" there at four o'clock one morning. Only the mood of it was good; the words were clumsy. Many pages of my journals and a few poems were written as I sat on the floor, with a lone candle lighting the page. Many hours I would ask myself, "Have I no destiny but to dance and be alone?"

Occasionally Moritz Jagendorf would come up and take me downtown for dinner and the precious talks we had together, freeing me for a little while from the ghosts of the house. Moritz is a person who, in spirit, has walked through many pages of this book. He goes back to a morning's mail in the days of *O-Mika* when I had fled to the Du Boises.

In his first letter he said that he was a young Jew, a student at Columbia, that he had been a number of times to the theater and now felt he must write me. The letter reminded me of Walter Schuster of Berlin, and something in its emotional urgency disturbed me at the time. His romantic, tender words made a great impression on my all too susceptible heart. I answered him, and Moritz has laughed many times over my reply. He declares that I advised him to take up Christian Science which, as a medical student, afforded him great amusement. As his letters continued to arrive, breathing out more and more romance, I grew frightened and would not agree to meet him.

He sent me, however, a snapshot of himself, and it showed a blond young man with sensitive, clear-cut features, his head well carried with a sense of conscious pride. After a while his letters stopped.

Some fifteen years or so passed. I had been photographed by that engaging individual, Nick Muray. His great passion was for fencing, which I think came even before his equally exuberant enthusiasm for the ladies. One evening he invited me to come to a party he was giving in Greenwich Village and watch him fence.

When I entered the room Nick and a friend were hard at it with their foils and he gave me merely a cheery greeting through his mask, calling out, "Find yourself a seat." This was easier said than done, as every available cushion and couch was already taken. So, rather diffidently, because this was the first time I had ever attended a party in the Village, I drifted over to one of the dormer windows that overlooked the roofs. I had stood there alone for a while when a man came

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from the other side of the room. He put out his hand saying, "I am Moritz Jagendorf."

I answered, "Not possible," and, blushing faintly, he said, "Indeed it is." He kissed my hand, and we stood for a moment in the recess of the window, trying to realize that after all these years we had met.

We saw each other often after that. His wife Sophie and I became excellent friends, and Moritz filled a curious spot in my life. His artistic sensitivity, his wise appraisal of life, his emotional understanding, always brought a release to my spirit.

That summer Mother passed away. I received a telegram from Buzz on the morning of one of the temple meetings. I went out on my private roof and sat a long time in the sun. How Mother adored the sun! I wondered whether I should go on with this little meeting. And then I experienced what countless daughters have, a lovely, intimate sense of her nearness, as though the little, frail, worn-out body had released her valiant soul to rush to the place her heart had ever been, guiding and protecting her Ruthie, that willful child who caused her so many hours of pain but who, thank God, brought her also many hours of joy.

I remained there on the roof for a long time, both cleansed and illumined by that simple, homely word "forgive," which dissolved all the barriers between my Mother's spirit and my own.

At last, with the deep feeling that in the face of death life must go on, I decided to hold the meeting that night. Her strength and unquenchable spirit of life held me close. We went through the ritual of the meeting as though nothing had occurred, until toward the end, just as the girls and I were about to begin our final dance of praise, I said quite simply that my Mother had died. There was a little murmur of sympathy from those present. Some, perhaps, wondered how I could carry on so soon after this news had come, but others willingly became part of our final dance of joy. They knew that I was dancing the victory of her spirit and praising that love which had outlived time and space.

A little modicum of family life went on during this period. I remember a lovely Christmas dinner set before the big fire with presents spread all over the floor. Toasts were drunk and a new spirit of loving-kindness was in the air, because Wells' young son was having his first Christmas with us. Wells' wife watched quietly from a couch beside the fire, but Wells could not suppress his pride in the wonder of this son who was busy trying to pedal his way on the little bicycle that Pearl had given him. Ada was there also; and Marie, her daughter;

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and Rollie, Marie's husband; and several of the dormitory boys and girls. Dada came in also for a nip of Christmas cheer.

Dada—I have tried to be self-contained about him. I have mentioned him tentatively on a number of occasions, hoping that would be enough, but it seems he will not get out of these pages until he is treated with the attention he demands, for Dada has been a part of my life at all times and can hardly be suppressed.

Dada began his day by suggesting in very sleepy tones from under the bedclothes that canopied his cage that it would be nice if someone got him an orange and his seed. He said this very sweetly several times. Then he napped a little in order to give us plenty of time to obey. When he awakened he repeated it, still very sweetly, for the last time. After that if you did not want everyone in the house, up as far as the library and down as far as the kitchen, to murder him you uncovered the cage at once and gave him his food. He quieted down instantly, reaching out a meek little claw for his fruit and settled himself for breakfast.

Late at night his scenes with Wayne were utterly ridiculous. Wayne, hat on the back of his head, overcoat on arm, would leave the room telling Dada, who had suddenly turned into a woman betrayed, that he was through with him forever. Dada would rage and storm and Wayne would stride around the room like a third-rate actor, as Dada clung desperately to the bars of his cage beseeching Wayne not to leave him. Wayne would at last assure him that he would return, and Dada would then subside into affectionate little peeps and sing quietly to himself.

Dada steadied me in my worst moments by always making me laugh, and he has kept this up with unflagging energy.

Occasionally I dined with that woman of exquisite sensitivity, Mary Fanton Roberts. She was a deeply sincere patron of the dance—almost an agitator, one might say. She had been a prophet and friend of Isadora Duncan, and also a devoted friend and admirer of mine. Years before, she had written a most penetrating article about my work and personality in her little magazine, *The Touchstone*. I often had dinner in Billy's and her enchanting old apartment on East Eighteenth Street where the little inner dining room was aglow with candles, and four or five choice spirits held forth between courses in animated discussion of some vigorous topic. Later we always moved into the library, that old room where so many writers and artists have had an evening's hospitality. I remember Theodore Dreiser, on one of these evenings, arriving like a huge liner towing a small tug in the person of a little



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blond girl who sat at his feet during the entire evening. Afterwards, on a couch under a lamp, I discussed some matter of poetry or life with my dear friend, Charles Hanson Towne, that inimitable personality known in the regions of the Brevoort and by all discerning people in the literary and stage worlds. After the guests had gone I probably lingered for a moment with Mary, Billy quietly hiding behind a book, while she and I thrashed out the possibilities of some new development of the dance.

Some of my friends felt that it was time I appeared in New York again. I had been playing sporadic engagements which had paid me a small but fixed sum and allowed for a small profit, but since I had been, for fifteen years, so closely identified with Ted and Denishawn, the entire managerial world regarded me now as exactly one half of a proposition. Theatrically I was dead. So I suppose I was an easy target for a young manager's blandishments. He had a grandiose idea of presenting me and, armed with a gift of several hundred dollars from a friend, I agreed and, with some of the girls, gave a performance. We put a great deal of work into the program. I did many of my old things, and though I felt reasonably satisfied with its artistic success I found, when it was all over, that I owed a stagehand bill of five hundred dollars. If you don't mind I will not linger over this but hurry on to more heartening matters.

This season we invaded the museums. I had long felt that it was time that the museums saw a closer correlation between the dance and the art forms that stemmed from it. This had long been a favorite theme of discussion, but nothing had been done about it.

Dr. Fox of the Brooklyn Museum was sympathetic to the idea as expressed to him by my friend, Dr. Tasilo Adams, that eloquent defender of Oriental arts. Dr. Adams and I put our heads together, and a stage, built corner-wise in the Sculpture Gallery, was the result of our cogitations. Here one afternoon the girls and I did a Javanese dance, for which Dr. Adams spoke a brief and pungent foreword. At another time we did a Greek ballet, and in the lovely round sculpture room, with its fountain and pool in the center and the light streaming from overhead, a curious feeling came over me that Greece was not dead, that all ancient worlds could be revived in this same manner.

Much water has run under the museum bridge since then. Arthur Prichard Moore has written a scholarly book called *The Library Museum of Music and Dance*, and my old platform has been used by the modern group to show Eleanor King's *Icaro*. This was an inter-

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esting experiment with a classic theme in a modern idiom. Jack Cole, who was in it, told me I must not miss it, so I made the long journey one morning to see Miss King and her associates dance this tragic poem. I have not space to tell how excellent I found much of it to be. But one thing that did stand out was the work of Alice Dudley, one of our Denishawn girls. I had never seen Alice in this form of serious work and she electrified me. She had assumed such dominion over her remarkable technique that she now was free to bring into play that natural lyricism that was part of her great charm as a dancer. She was like a slender golden flame.

Sometimes Denishawn House became unbearable to me, and then I would ring up the Savadskys and tell them I was lonesome and wanted to see them. Mme. Savadsky had been an accompanist for the various classes for some time, and through her I met her husband Vasily. Many evenings I was restored by talking with Savadsky about his master, Scriabin, about the latter's music and his great vision of a temple. Savadsky, who had easily grasped the vast implications of my temple idea, gave me unfailing sympathy. We would end these evenings with bread and cheese and coffee, and I would go home refreshed.

One of Savadsky's ideas was that all of us dance creators and teachers should know each other better and perhaps combine on a possible design for the general enrichment of the dance. One evening he took me down to see his great friend, Michel Fokine. Fokine's studio was also his and Mme. Fokina's home on Riverside Drive. As I mounted the great marble staircase with a vivid and lovely picture of Vera Fokina on the landing and was greeted in the great dining room by Fokine himself I felt that I was being received by a grandee of some old reigning house rather than by a dancing teacher. Fokine's manner, though austere, was gracious. Of course he had a keen intellect and easily grasped the point of any new adventure in the dance. I remember his quiet charm and my impression that he seemed to be waging a losing battle in his effort to teach the supreme techniques and reverent attitudes of the ballet to unregenerate American students. I felt a presumptuous, perhaps unreasoning pity for one who was plainly being caught in the cogs of our machine age. But his later success in London proved my sympathy to be quite unnecessary. We discussed Fokine's ideas of a loosely knit organization for all American dancers but, as is often the case with this kind of planning, it was not possible to reconcile our divergent systems of the dance, and the plan fell through.

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Surely this was a period rich in friends, if arid in love. That sustaining and releasing friend, Anne Hoyt, came into my life at this time. She had been a member of the temple congregation, and she has never failed, from that time until now, to give me that steady valuation and affection without which no art and no manifestation of beauty can possibly survive. Anne belongs in that rare hierarchy of my true patrons who, over the years, have lined like sentinels my stormy and sometimes bewildered path. She is that rare thing in these modern and hurrying days—a lady—and when she attended rehearsals or came ■ a program she brought such an air of sweetness and poise that invariably a finer key was set for the occasion. All my family valued a word of praise from Anne, because her cultural background was so deep and her appraisals so true. Up in her adorable cabin in the Berkshires I began the study of Maeterlinck's play *Monna Vanna*. The Walter Hartwigs and I had agreed that we would attempt this at his theater at Ogunquit, Maine, where I have given a number of concerts for Walter's select summer clientele. I roamed the woods near Anne's cabin, declaiming Maeterlinck to the birds—who were doubtless astonished, since most of them flew away. Jocky, Anne's darling old Sealyham, would hover about hunting chipmunks in the leaves while I leaned against an old log and sobbed out *Monna Vanna's* complaints to a congregation of the trees.

When I gave it at Ogunquit there were difficulties, and I was not a howling success, but that never deterred the Hartwigs from loving me.

Ted by now had gone up to the farm he had bought in the Berkshires and named Jacob's Pillow. He, too, was struggling with the new adjustments in his life, and waging an heroic battle to establish his training camp for men dancers. He had believed so fervently in the dance for men that I admired his faith and determination now in the face of disbelief and criticism. By 1933 he had established himself as an artistic factor in the countryside and his Friday teas, when he and the boys tried out their dances, were beginning to draw patrons from all over the Berkshires. I drove up to one of these teas, and the work they were doing there was a revelation. There was an atmosphere of wholesome living, of "agriculture into art" that delighted and amazed me. He had just completed his stunning new dance *John Brown Sees the Glory*. My whole heart went out to him in admiration. He had the courage to do the thing that lay nearest his heart and in which he most believed. And while things at that moment looked pretty black for his outward success I told him with deep emotion that he must not lose courage but give what he had in simplicity and fullness

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wherever and however it could be done, if necessary without financial recompense. He was good enough to say afterwards that my faith and enthusiasm did help him to go on, and the world now knows the results of those struggles.

Seeing Ted from a different vantage point, I thought as I came away from the farm that no one realized his strong individuality, his splendid intelligence, his charm and personality better than I. He was a rare and forceful person, capable of great singleness of purpose and an artist of fine concepts, carried into execution with skill and style, while underneath he was always growing spiritually, desiring passionately to find his real selfhood. He had balance of the physical, emotional, and spiritual elements to a remarkable degree. He is easily the greatest man in the dance world today, if one accepts the standard of moral, intellectual, and physical faculties, focused in art expression, as the ideal.

Meanwhile clouds of debt were gathering over Denishawn House. Everyone was subtly aware that the days of Denishawn were numbered. Pearl and I were trying, perhaps stubbornly and blindly, perhaps courageously—I do not know—to do an impossible thing. Every cent I could get my hands on by performances, by lectures, by radio, all went into the bottomless pit of the mortgage. Probably everyone else saw that it was a hopeless task. But we kept on to the bitter end.

At last Pearl felt, and I agreed with her, that she had been long enough away from her beloved California, so she and her sister Ruby left to establish themselves in a large house in Hollywood, a miniature of Denishawn, and gathered around them those Denishawners left over from the old days and many new friends besides, and their center has much of the warmth and creativeness and charm of the big school.

In the long last, after Pearl had gone, there was nothing for me to do but acknowledge my defeat. With Pearl's departure Adolphine Rott came in her own quiet way to fill that office of friend and wardrobe director. Adolphine, as we call her, gradually became a part of our life, although she had her own family. I know that she felt, nevertheless, that she had a second family in us, and we continued to interrupt our fittings with a cup of tea and a little gossip about our neighbors.

My little circle of Anna and Wells, Don Begenau and Ruth Harwood were very close to my heart at this time and remained true in their devotion. Without them there would have been no future life.

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These troubled years were now coming to an end. The final scene of Denishawn House found me sitting in the dining room with boxes and trunks all around me, not knowing what to do or where to go. The blow had fallen. The mortgage was foreclosed. I had worked up to the last hour ■ try to save this house—this symbol of that vanishing life. Now I had to leave. Dada and I were having lunch together, my misery too deep for words.

There was a ring at the doorbell, and in came an old friend, a patron of long standing, Arabia ■ Khouri. She stood astonished, and said, "What does all this mean?" I replied, "I am moving from Denishawn House. Or perhaps I should say Denishawn House is moving from me." She asked, "Where are you going?" and I replied, "I haven't the slightest idea. I have hunted from one end of the island to the other, for a place to house my grand piano, a studio couch, and Dada, but I have not found it. Nobody wants a dancer. We make too much noise, and we can never pay enough rent."

She glanced over the dozens of trunks that were lining the room and said, "I have a storeroom where I can at least take some of your trunks." With horrid visions of my storage bill I jumped at the suggestion. "Get into my car," she said, "and I'll drive you down to see it."

Arriving at the door of her little brick house on Forty-fourth Street, we went upstairs, and I inspected the built-on loft above her garden. I was seized with an inspiration and exclaimed, "Perhaps you don't know it—but you are going to have a tenant. I am not only going to store here—I am going to live here." She laughed. "You are most welcome, but there is no bath and no kitchen." For a moment I was almost floored, but it has been said that beggars cannot be choosers. Thanks to her kindness I found sanctuary, had a home for my beloved piano, my couch and my Dada.

These are my last hours at Denishawn House. Don is seeing to the final packing of my personal effects, so I go up to take my last look from the roof. On the way up I come to the little library where, as the princess of the tower, I used occasionally to sleep; then I go out onto the roof and, leaning over the parapet, look at the reservoir and remember many things. In a few hours Denishawn will be no more, I breathe a blessing upon what has been and go down again.

Don bundled me into a taxi with my personal belongings, and Dada in his cage, and we started the long journey downtown. Spiritual distances were taking place in my heart as well. We arrived at Forty-fourth Street, and Don, my beloved Don, helped me up the little

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narrow stairs. When I got to the top I gave a gasp of surprise. He had lovingly hung some of the green curtains from the studio around this little room. For an instant I had the illusion that I was coming into the big studio; and then realization clamped down upon me and I sank sobbing onto a couch, while poor Don tried to comfort me.

This was the apparent finish to all my dreams and all my plans. But this too was an illusion.



**CHAPTER XV: The Third Life:** THE first few days on Forty-fourth Street were spent in getting Don and myself adjusted to this sympathetic but tiny apartment with its little bedroom office in the front and the studio under the skylight. My Don, Mr. Begenau to his students, was one of the Denishawn boys whose progress as a dancer and a personality had been slow but sure. His steadfastness and his naturally affectionate nature were of unending value to me then, and I shall always hold him and his loyalty in eternal gratitude. In those days he was the buffer between me and the telephone, the ubiquitous bill collectors and the casual people who still wanted my photograph. He saved me from a hundred irritating experiences, and did numberless tasks through the day and into the night. Don practically ran my life for me, and as we gradually orientated ourselves into some state of harmonious existence life took on a slightly more comfortable aspect.

Yet this little studio became a strange kind of prison. The four walls shut me in from the world and at the same time shut me off from all avenues of escape, all forms of expression, and for a period of many months I was turned back upon myself and my journals. These helpless pages received the impact of my mind's energies. In contrast to the full and even self-indulgent life of the successful artist, I was suddenly reduced to an existence of almost complete inactivity. And yet this sanctuary was the material environment in which that career, implicit in my other life, would begin to sprout.

Instead of many efficient people, a large income from performances, the attention of the world through publicity and travel, I had only the devoted help of Don and Anna and Wells and a small annuity which barely met my needs.

But why, after all my service to art, why after all these years of labor and handling of at least a quarter of a million dollars did I find myself in abject poverty, lonely and artistically defeated? Why should the struggles, the delays, the frustrations and defeats of the

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artist's temperament forever be the seed and soil out of which grows the beauty he achieves?

The human tragedy of artists must, at some time, bring itself to the attention of all earnest thinkers and seekers after truth. That something is terribly wrong with the whole round of artists' lives must be apparent to anyone who takes the trouble to observe it.

Part of their existence is lived as spoiled children, full of petty egotisms, resentment against disciplines, with a false sense of their own value and accepting without gratitude the gifts of love that are showered on them because of their talent and charm. The other extreme—and they continually oscillate between the two poles—are lonely, harassed, misunderstood souls, making a gift to the world at the price of their own suffering.

Is it any wonder that from this soil should spring an unreal blossom whose perfume gives dreams of escape to those who inhale it, that can bring neither comfort nor light to souls groping in darkness? For it has no power to heal the misery of the world, since much of this thing we call art is posited upon the shifting sands of our three-dimensional existence. Our hopes, our plans, our very egocentric identification with the processes of the artist's life rest upon this unstable basis rather than upon the eternal foundations of the soul. Therefore it is inevitable that in the end the artist himself will be destroyed by the growth and development of the thing that he has served. And this thing does not heal the world of its miseries, but it throws completely out of alignment all his human relationships; and, perhaps gravest of all, his own sense of personal creativeness becomes an obstacle, and prevents his highest realization of life. I knew this, but was not able to free myself from this dream.

Though it seemed I had died three separate deaths—in my art, my life with Ted, and now in Denishawn—yet out of all this was to come a completely new birth. This rebirth and third epoch of my life began after I was fifty. The first period started when I danced in Worth's Museum, and ended on the momentous day when I met Ted Shawn on Eighty-ninth Street. Then came the second career, in companionship with Ted, which included those hectic years that took us to the Orient and back. And now this third epoch was at hand.

Don's and my domestic comfort in this new life was achieved gradually; the necessities of shower and kitchen and shelves were dealt with by Don, and at last we had a sense of completeness. The old green table and the benches reposed proudly in the middle of what I later called the "green chamber." The old piano looked quite huge in this



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tiny place. Dada settled himself noisily to take possession of the entire studio.

Of course Wells very quickly came into this threesome. Many afternoons he sat at the piano while I explained a lovely episode from the *Genji*, and we prepared to transform it into a brief poetic scene, supported by his delicate emotional composition. Then Ruth Harwood came in with several sketches on which she had been working, stimulated by one of the former temple meetings. I went over these enthusiastically, as Ruth has a definite gift for symbolic drawing. Anna dropped in and brought me gossip of some of the downtown Denishawn boys and girls. And sometimes I went over and had supper with the Austins, glad to get away from my thoughts for a while and into Mother Austin's friendly atmosphere.

One afternoon when I was in a despondent mood Ruth came in and sat down beside me. A sympathetic word from her caused me to pour out my resentments against this thwarted state in which I found myself. I began to sob, and laid my head on the table. Ruth wisely said nothing for a moment, and then asked very simply, "Why don't you begin the temple services again?"

I looked at her in disbelief. "I can't begin them here! It's too small. It takes music and space, and the rhythmic choir, and, above all, enthusiasm. I'm too unhappy."

Ruth answered, "Your congregation is all adrift. We need the temple." I looked at her blankly for a moment; and then I began to react to this word "need," which, when all else fails, puts us into action again. I turned around on the bench to look at the room. "I suppose we could seat twenty-five people. And we could put an altar at the back of the room if you think anyone would like to come."

Later Anna came in for tea, and Wells and Don returned, and they were all very happy over the decision. Wells immediately began to plan a slightly different service. Anna said she would assemble some girls for the rhythmic choir, and Don of course assumed responsibility for all the practical details. Before we knew it, in the interval of the English muffins and the tea, the temple was reborn. And life began again for me.

The following Thursday night I put on my white prophetess dress, and to a little invited group, for whom Don played the usher and Wells the piano, I began to speak of those things which lay nearest my heart. Not, I believe, in any self-pity, in any sad remembrance of things gone by, but in a new realization of the indwelling life. We put on a singing record of the Mormon Choir, and to this I impro-

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vised, and then, to Wells' lovely music of praise, I finished the evening.

On Monday nights we had meetings of the rhythmic choir, when we spoke of the theory and technique of the choir. In this assembly of new members only Anna and my lovely Mary Brandt remained over from Denishawn House. Mary became such an enthusiast for the temple that when her opportunity came to become the head of a physical education and dance department at the Yeng Ching University at Peiping she carried both the spirit and some of the simpler forms of the temple to give her Chinese girls.

Here as I sat in a ring with the choir, and explained to them what I felt the attitude of a true dancing celebrant should be, a kind of prose-poem welled up in mind. It is as good a statement of the attitude of the dancer in the temple as I can make. I feel that it is valuable because it contains not only the subjective attitude of the dancer but also the objective indications of action, a kind of structure of ritual that I believe will be significant in the future:

The Dancer comes ■ the Altar. . . . The Dedication:

I, the Dancer,  
Bring my body  
To the feet of God.

The Dancer lies on the Altar. . . . Surrender:

All rhythms, forms, and powers  
Of my being  
I lay on the Altar  
Of the Cosmic Mind.

The Dancer Kneels. . . . Prayer:

Oh! Infinite Father-Mother  
Of all living things,  
Accept me as the Child  
Of your Eternal Bliss.  
  
Oh! Infinite Creator  
Of the turning worlds,  
Use me in the Pattern  
Of your Infinite Design.  
Cause me to move  
In the rhythms of Divine Creation.

The Dancer ascends the steps to the Symbol. . . . Understanding:

In lines of Light  
I behold the structure of all Designs.

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In curves of color  
I hear the sound  
Of the Eternal Word.

The Dancer turns around from the Symbol. . . . Realization:

I feel  
Around me the spaces of Eternity.  
I hear  
The beat of the soundless Drum.  
I stand  
Bathed in the Light of distant Suns.  
I turn  
With the ageless rhythms of the Stars.  
I touch  
The etheric waves of Love.  
I walk  
In the measures of Eternity.

The Dancer steps down to the Dancing Space. . . . Expression:

Look!  
The World is filled with Light!  
Listen! The Cosmic Drums are beating!  
My Dance of Life begins!

The Dancer begins to move in the rhythms of the Divine Dance.

The personnel of the temple grew. One young person after the other would be attracted to some quality in the service, and the ritual became more integrated. Of those who composed that first little choir, Hadassah springs first to my mind. A fine, sensitive soul, her spiritual life was revived, and she found a new meaning in the dance. Elyse Robert, who looked like a Botticelli painting, found her first contact with God and reality in the choir, and carried its message afield. The beloved Bass family, mother and daughters, soon became a loyal and intimate part of the temple, and the girls participated in the pageants. These were among the first slender pillars of the new temple.

In the early days Donald Sutphin, who had hopes of studying for the priesthood, watched these efforts struggle to their feet again. Intensely sympathetic to the temple, he became what he affectionately termed a "field secretary." He was known as "Brother Don," to distinguish him from our other Don. One day at luncheon he brought a good-looking, keenly intelligent individual, Andrew Long, to discuss matters of the temple. Brother Don had thought he would be sympathetic. Andrew and I immediately plunged into a number of fascinat-

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ing subjects in relation to arts and theology, and I knew I had found a real friend. He was at that time studying for the Episcopal ministry, at the General Theological Seminary.

After a number of eager discussions I prevailed upon him to become my first reader, which post he filled with distinction, and an understanding of the needs of this unique service. Later Helen Parks, a charming young woman with a beautiful voice, became our second reader. Andrew remained for a number of months in office; and then, his studies becoming more demanding, he was obliged to step out. Brother Don assumed his place, continuing his secretarial duties as well, with the guidance of Don Begenau, and laying tentative plans for a singing choir, with the assistance of that fine organist, Albert Robinson, of Holy Rood Church.

I missed Andrew in the temple, for besides filling his role in the evolution of the idea he had also proven a loyal and stimulating friend, to whom I constantly turned for inspiration and release of my spirit. But he found his place rapidly in the Episcopal Church after his ordination, and very soon became rector of his own church.

Among the devoted members of our congregation were Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Dill Scotti. I had known the Scottis at Denishawn House, but not until this winter did they come into the temple in an active and tangible way. For as the temple unfolded, and more and more people began to be attracted to it, a hundred practical questions of membership and personnel made it seem right and feasible to form an organization, and this was called the Society of Spiritual Arts. This included our incorporation as a church, and Mr. Scotti gave his services in attending to all the minutiae of this proceeding as his gift to the society.

Interesting people began to climb the stairs and what we termed the general public for the first time attended these meetings. James Weldon Johnson was brought by a friend. He was a mild, gracious person, and we were all greatly attracted to him. He stayed after the meeting, and finally, like the generous soul he was, read his *God's Trombones* for us alone.

Almost from the first of these meetings Edwin Strawbridge brought, with great simplicity and generosity, the gift of his art and the appreciations of his mind; and on one or two evenings I danced with him when we did the Doxology as a plastique. Once he did a very beautiful solo as an offering on the altar.

Swami Nikilalanda came and translated his beautiful, calm, and luminous personality into words; and Manly P. Hall gave one of his

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unforgettably vivid talks. One evening a mother and daughter climbed the stairs and brought almost a new dimension into my life. Henrietta Buckmaster was a writer and a thinker and therefore, I suppose, a little sparing with words. But she brought a quiet appreciation to the meetings that always made us know when she was in the congregation, and we never failed to watch her beautiful, luminous eyes as they were fixed on the celebrants. Her mother, whom I called Ditiya Henkle, was a fragile, lovely little person with beautiful gray hair, twinkling eyes, and a most ingratiating manner. In her sympathy with the temple she served as a sort of hinge between the meetings and those friends whom she brought. She, like a number of people who are in the pages of this book, should have a salon and utilize her capacity to bring interesting people into harmonious relationships.

On one occasion we had the distinguished author, Dr. Sum Nung Au-Young, who came in the unaccustomed role of a musician. He played a butterfly harp, while I danced a Chinese fragment. Dr. Au-Young had made a valuable translation of the *Tah Teh King*, the philosophy of the Tao. His English is clear and flowing, and among my real treasures is a copy of this work which is all too rare. Dr. Au-Young is one of my most distinguished Oriental friends, and his sympathy with all artistic forms of Western culture and his keen intelligence in relation to artistic values are intensely stimulating.

In my rhythmic choir was a lovely personality with whom I felt a special sympathy and who followed the doings of the temple with a most stimulating expectancy. She was Isabel Kinnison Eddy, and after she had been with us for some time she brought her husband, Paul Dawson Eddy, one evening. And thereby hangs a tale to be unfolded.

Several clergymen made a point of coming to the services. The Reverend John Ramsay was in the congregation nearly every Thursday evening. He was acknowledged by the theological graduates of that year to be perhaps the most brilliant of the seminary output. He was a most dedicated soul with a brilliant intellect and a great charm of manner. Another young Episcopalian who gave me great encouragement was Ted Ferris of Grace Church.

Almost without my control the temple was seeking to relate itself to the orthodox church. The rhythmic choir began evolving into a rhythmic pageant, to be performed before the altar of the churches. I believed that the churches needed this revivifying interest, and those who agreed with me welcomed it. And I also knew that the great future metaphysical ballets which I had conceived as taking place on the

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actual, if as yet hypothetical, altar of my temple, were quite impossible in the humble surroundings in which we were functioning.

At a service of worship on a Sunday in December, I gave a ritual of the *Masque of Mary*, with the rhythmic choir, at Harry Emerson Fosdick's Riverside Church, in New York. Here, perhaps for the first time in a Christian temple, was my initial gesture toward the production of a Christian temple dance. I had the consciousness that the audience understood the symbolism of the pageant, in the same way as an audience attending a Nô drama understands the symbolism of its Buddhistic faith.

The whole pageant began with an organ prelude, which was followed by the seating of the congregation, and the singing of a hymn and the reading of scripture. The Lord's Prayer was given by the congregation; the offering was made. At last the great chancel of the beautiful Gothic church was empty. Wells was seated at the organ, and after a brief prelude the White Madonna appeared.

The White Madonna is the total being of Woman, passive, waiting, hidden behind the heavy veil of time. She is the being of creative love. As the rhythmic choir moved down the long aisle her white veil slipped from her head and, dropping to her feet, revealed her in soft madonna blue. This was the color of the divine ecstasy of love—luminous, humble, and yet exalted.

After a plastique of the shepherds she assumed the red veils of the nativity. This color symbolized the experience of birth, the descent into the human consciousness of life, and the bringing forth of the Divine Child.

As the wise men and the shepherds fell away from the center of the altar, making a gorgeous grouping of color around the Madonna, the last veil of the series was put upon her by her attendants. She now wore the gold of fulfillment. Robed in this symbolic color, and taking the child in her hands, she held him in front of her while she was borne aloft on the shoulders of the shepherds; and in a last exultant gesture Mary made her supreme presentation to the world in the person of the Divine Child.

The huge congregation here at Riverside Church seemed friendly and appreciative. Many of my close friends had come to see this unusual production—some of them well-known personages, and I believe that Dr. Fosdick and his associates were pleased with this attempt at the incorporation of one of the oldest arts of the world into the service of religion.

We repeated the service at Rutgers Church, at Seventy-second Street,

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under Dr. Russell, that very liberal pastor who said warm and appreciative things to me afterwards. Then we gave a fragment of it at International House. Everywhere our audience-congregation were reverential and appreciative. They felt the atmosphere of release and joy and the subdued gaiety which prevailed in these pageants; and it seemed to meet a need for those seeking both a spiritual conviction and an aesthetic hour of beauty.

In the spring, with the sympathetic cooperation of Dr. Wiley of the Park Avenue Presbyterian Church, I gave, before the altar, a rhythmic interpretation of the Psalms. Dr. Wiley was very appreciative but, as with nearly everything I do, it had its comic aftermath. As Dr. Wiley stood in the foyer of the church after my service a strange minister stepped up to him and said, "Who invited this woman here?" "I did," said Dr. Wiley. "And whose idea was it to have her dance here in the chancel?" "It was my idea," replied the doctor stoutly. "Well, thank God somebody has had the courage to do it!" exclaimed this unknown minister.

Later I did a more modern pageant at Calvary Church.

I enjoyed, perhaps more than with any other group, cooperating with the people of this church. Everyone from "Erb," the general overseer, to Jack Smith, who gave me his unfailing enthusiasm, and Vernon de Tar, the organist, who held the pageant together with his playing and his choir, supported me with enthusiasm. My dear friend Julia Ford went to the expense of having a motion picture taken of the pageant. Her son Ellsworth superintended the filming, and this generous act was very like Julia, who since the days of *Radha* and Julia's poets' salon, has maintained an unflagging interest in me and my work. Joseph Pilates, who also takes movies, and Mr. Borowsky supplemented Julia's films with some colored ones, which turned out superbly.

This was all satisfying, but I began to feel, aside from the expense involved in these productions, that they were going wide of the basic intention of the temple. We had not the totally dedicated personnel, nor the material condition in which to fulfill the idea. I felt it better to wait until these two necessary elements were achieved before I did any other major work.

Thus we see that from the small confines of the Forty-fourth Street studio a great matter had been set in movement.

But it was merely an outward form of success, faintly shadowing forth certain expressions of the temple. For the more I realized the needs of the young people who came to my temple and whose lives

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I touched, as well as the unsolved problems in my own emotional life, the more I was driven inevitably to inquire with a new earnestness into the whole tragic subject of our moral principles and of creative-love as it manifested itself hour by hour and day by day in all our lives.

One temple evening I took for our subject "The Rhythms of Love," and this marked the first tentative manifestation in speech and dance form of the questions and answers pertaining to this vital question. And as the months went on I felt increasingly that one last letter for my word of life had not been found—some missing element that would give me peace, some decision of the heart which would balance and release me from my stumbling state of mind. Months later, in London, I found the answer. But in the interval I went through an experience the like of which I had never known before.

Before I speak of this next period of my life I want to state in the utmost simplicity that I have always sought to relate the outward actions of my emotional life to an inner ideal. It has been this spiritual necessity which has caused my subjective suffering all these years. Had I accepted lesser planes of activity, mere self-indulgences, and the compromises that go with a supposedly Bohemian existence, I would not have suffered.

On my long pilgrimage to a perfected love it was inevitable that I would go through many dark phases and many fragmentary experiences, sometimes beautiful in themselves but, since they were fragments, not to be accepted for the whole. Up until now I had evaded the full implications of my own nature, and I could no longer do this. My own misguided attempts to bring into my life that beauty of completeness which I so desired reached its culmination in the ensuing months.

I entered a strange, magical life, lived as in a dream, but actual, having its enchanted hours in the very midst of that other life which swirled and hurried about it, scarcely aware of its existence. And this without special planning, or any wish to deceive.

The two vibrating poles of my being lived and moved and had their rhythms within the confines of this little room. Yet in nowise did they touch the other's orbits, or confuse their separate issues. This green chamber saw the beginning of a relationship such as I had never known before, and such as I shall never know again. In the end I was to realize, at last, that the flesh has its own wisdom, and desire its own voice of truth. I saw that I had, all my life because of my Protestant inheritance, denied this essential and elemental fact. But not until I put cruel hours and a sea between us did I come to understand that this



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same beauty of desire was but one aspect of that perfected love toward which I had been moving.

I met a man of the Orient, who embodied much of that mysterious quality of quiet, inward beauty coupled with a sense of power which I had long associated with the East. He desired nothing from me but the beauty of love itself; yet in the very depths of this ambiguous romance, in these love-filled hours, I discovered in him a curious moral freedom. In no way did he seek to label our relationship. To him the supreme art of life was the art of love. I sensed with the first delicate caress of his slender brown hands that our love might easily be but one episode in his quest for beauty. Nevertheless, to me it was the responding of my pure woman nature, which never had been allowed the inexpressible beauty of its will.

In that long journey to the East, during tropic nights in Burma, or lazily resting in the bright sunshine on a ship in the China Sea, or in the solitudes of my hidden life, I had, I suppose, unconsciously felt that somewhere, somehow, would be a lover who would in his own being sum up those dreams of exotic beauty which I had so long cherished.

He came one afternoon to tea, a poet, a philosopher, quiet, subtle, charming, faintly disturbing; with a beautifully shaped head, slender, artistic hands; carrying himself well in our Western clothes.

We had met briefly before, at the apartment of a friend. I had then brought the manuscript of a series of little poems I had written. Gently he had taken them from my hands and, leaning back on the soft couch, had given them a gravely sweet interpretation as he read them aloud. Now he was here, remarking, with a slow smile, upon the violet color of my dress, which he said went well with my hair. I asked him about his work. And so this first fateful afternoon passed swiftly, full of inner, harmonious tensions, each aware of some phase of unuttered beautiful desire.

We were a Poet and a Dancer; and we became lovers. And let it be said of us that Beauty was our god whom we worshiped in rites of such pure loveliness that he became my Emperor and I became Moon to his Imperial Sun. Poems, like shy white birds, rose from our union: records of the strange drama of our love. For the end, days and months away, I believed that I was not loved: that only the desperate bonds of irresistible desire held me fast in a dreadful ignominy, although these cords were beautiful beyond belief. It was a magical, unreal game of delight, shot through with stern heart searchings on my part, and sometimes bewildered questionings on his.

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Though for the most part, he continued undisturbed in his gracious moods, sensitive to every moment of these intensely beautiful hours.

Evening after evening he came, though with long intervals, because of the outer necessities of living, and the world's pull and drag toward duller things. . . .

I called these early meetings the Magic Gardens, for they seemed to my conscience no answer to my deepest need; but only an unreal and exotic gesture of love, which was contrary to all my heritage of lawful mating and my need for peace.

Later I was to see that he had been sent by heaven, to teach me this long-neglected wisdom, to unveil the deep meanings of my feminine selfhood, whose simple, elemental powers I had evaded and denied. But I knew with my deepest intuition that spiritual unity was the fundamental necessity of that law of love which expresses itself in the ultimate fulfillment of desire. And that unity was not possible here. This whole episode and my final defeat was an evidence that until now my spiritual understanding and strength of character had not been equal to meeting this challenge and so I must take refuge in flight.

One evening I had been dancing the rhythms of the Lotus under his admiring gaze. But as I moved, without music, through the dance I suddenly stopped and realized that this whole dream had come to an end; here was the illusion of love in its most beautiful aspect, but possessing the insubstantiality of all desire which has not its basic structure in a unity of the heart. . . . The Magic Gardens were no more.

To his bewilderment and distress I said I would not see him again, but in the succeeding days I was in despair. I dared not trust myself to hear his voice over the telephone. It seemed that I had surrendered myself to those very sensualities I had condemned all my life: sensualities without love, and therefore ultimately without that meaning that my ideal of perfected love contained. Yet on the positive side of beauty I had known a harmony and a fulfillment that had exceeded all my dreams, and my heart still sang in gratitude for having known this strange quality of desire.

To the last remnants of my Protestant conscience this relationship was the ultimate climax of my emotional sin, and I struck out blindly for some way of escape. I remembered that I had a contract to produce a pageant in Pittsburgh, and that I was expected some three weeks before the opening. Suddenly I saw that here was a way. I wired that I was coming at once.

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I left some weeks before I was expected. The night I got onto the Pullman and we drew out of the Pennsylvania Station I realized that something had ended which would allow me time to look back upon this whole experience. What I had not counted on, however, was a curious, lingering attitude of deep pain and regret at leaving a being who had so fed the deep springs of my womanhood. I think I knew for the first time in my life what it was to be simple and elemental, faithful and singlehearted. The abysses that I imagined separated us spiritually and racially seemed to have nothing whatever to do with this union which had taken place. A dull ache pursued me for days, and when I arrived I plunged headlong into feverish preparations for the forthcoming pageant.

But this whole production proceeded only on the surface of my mind. Nothing reached the depth and poignancy of my desire, which still hung in the green chamber. Sometimes a brief note was sent to New York; or a little poem, which I could not quite deny myself, came from him.

My good friend and fellow artist, Karl Heinrich, who has been so comforting and so supporting in his interest in my ballet of the States, took charge of the whole pageant, gave me his pupils, who were eager, delightful youngsters, and saw me through the strain of pulling this large pageant together. He has long been interested in a Civic Ballet for Pittsburgh, a creation of his brain that is at last, I think, taking shape. If it does come to fruition, it will be because of his long years of faithful service to the dance.

I lived at the school of that teacher and art patron Ferdinand Fillion, who has a splendid organization of music and the other related arts, including the dance. This quite remarkable school is a feature of the cultural life of Pittsburgh. Orchestration and languages and drama and dance are taught, and some of its products are a beautiful string orchestra, chorus, a verse-speaking choir, and a wind ensemble.

Fillion gave me every assistance in putting on this pageant, and managed all the business details. Among his artist-teachers was that remarkable interpreter of Debussy, Maurice Dumesnil. Fillion thought that we should give a joint Debussy recital. We enthusiastically agreed to this, and during my stay here at the school I created seven Debussy dances which constituted the first part of the coming program. Dumesnil was a marvelous pianist for dancers, having already made a famous South American tour with Isadora Duncan. He was that superb combination, a traditionalist who sympathized with the necessity for slight compromises with the dance.

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The pageant was sung by a chorus of a hundred, banked on either side of the Carnegie Music Hall. That marvelous mezzo-soprano, Sula Wing, gave a strangely beautiful quality to the whole of the cantata. Karl Heinrich played Joseph, and Virginia Miller, one of his most talented students, who became such a loving and comforting part of my life later, was the angel of the star. And with the support of Fillion's string orchestra about fifty of Karl's students and I danced the pageant to the tender and beautiful music of Evangeline Lehman.

When I returned to New York I saw my Emperor once more, and I discovered that nothing had been changed by my flight. So, still unable to face the situation, I saw nothing else to do but go away once more. In this flight, this running away from a problem, I was only repeating with a deadly monotony the cycles of desire and fear and defeat which had dogged my years until now. In other words, there was no answer in flight. Yet I devised excuses for myself and others. About this time a pleasant destiny presented itself in the person of Files Bledsoe, a tall, rangy Texan, something of a poet and a writer, whom I had known during my brief flurry with motion pictures in California. One morning a rap came on my door while I was rehearsing, and there he stood. He said that he had arrived in New York to connect with the theater, and to say hello to me.

We plunged into discussions of the things that interested us both, and since he was not very busy at the time I suggested that he help me type my journals. In going through them, he found a page or two begun by Charles Allais in the Denishawn House days, when we had started a tentative autobiography. Now Files, with his sensitive feeling both for the drama and the color of life, urged me, in the language of the classics, to get busy. Presently, under pressure from him, I began to orientate my mind to the fact of a book.

Here was something to occupy my thoughts and give me a valid reason for leaving New York. Anne Hoyt provided the word that resolved me, and the three of us set sail for London.

The trip was long and rather stormy. I spent my time in the state-room, and my thoughts were never idle. Files, on the other hand, marched the decks with eager anticipation. It was an old story to Anne—this crossing—and at least a familiar one to me; but to Files it was an entirely new experience.

The first night in London we spent down by Trafalgar in a fog, listening to the faint roar of the city, which seemed so mellow and subdued after New York. Then we strolled down Victoria Street, and

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stood listening to the midnight boom of Big Ben, and saw the Abbey looming up huge and mysterious in the night.

We went through the usual business of finding a place to live, and after awhile I thought of Rose Mazumdar, of the old *Radha* days. I knew he had opened a hotel in London, and although I felt sure it would be too expensive for us it seemed possible that he could suggest the proper lodgings. A note was sent him, and he replied by asking us to tea.

Rose and I greeted each other with outstretched hands and immediately plunged into family gossip. Was the blessed Mother still alive? No, alas; but Brother was flourishing in California, and had two beautiful boys and a prosperous importing business.

The history of Rose's achievements surrounded him. His wife and son were gracious and cordial and the charm of the little hotel was plain to see. Rose himself, alas, had grown stouter and looked every inch the businessman.

Just as we were about to leave, I said, "Rose, we've got to find some place to live, and I need a studio." And Rose replied, "In that case, you must come here." "I'd love to, Rose," I said hesitantly, "but I'm afraid it would be too expensive." And then Rose did that which I think only an Indian could do. He remembered, or said he remembered, that in the old days I had helped him return to India, and that Mother had been kinder than perhaps she need be; all of which he had never forgotten. He said that today he had enough money for himself and his family, that with the help of the gods and his own industry he had achieved this hotel, and that before his chapter was told he wished to bring joy and pleasure to others. He showed me my photographs on the mantel; and turning to me, he said, "Miss Ruth, you must stay here at my hotel as my guest as long as you are able."

I did not know what to do. It was like a ray of sunshine on a cloudy day. I felt that I should not accept this evidence of his gratitude, and said so; but he insisted, and finally it was arranged that we should move in the next day.

For a while my pleasure and excitement at being in London again swept everything else from my mind. So many joyful memories were associated with London that I plunged into a orgy of seeing friends and ballets and plays.

Not long after we arrived Anne and I, riding in a bus, saw a huge *affiche* outside of Albert Hall announcing a Greek festival by the Ruby Ginner School. This sounded very thrilling, and with great difficulty we bought tickets. The huge place was rapidly selling out, a

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tribute to this splendid school and its effort to reinstate the classic glory of the Greek dance.

I impatiently awaited the evening, and when it at last arrived we clambered into the upper reaches of the hall—and I am now glad that we took those balcony seats, where we could look down on the ballet. What we beheld was the kind of spectacle we never have in America. It was semiprofessional, semiamateur, with groups and groups of dancers from various branches of the parent school. The chairs of the orchestra had been removed, and the space covered with canvas. At one end was a great stage of several levels. The dancing was all evolved from a modern adaptation of Greek techniques and themes. The performance was concluded with a Greek ritual, done with the full orchestra and chorus, and danced by Ruby Ginner as the leader of a band of Greek celebrants.

I was thrilled by the whole performance, and envious of this old concert hall which lent itself to the needs of the dance better than anything we had in New York. Later Miss Ginner and her husband, Mark Peregrini, with sympathetic and efficient Mary Starling at the piano, gave me an informal evening, and I danced several of the Debussy things and one or two Orientals.

One of the interesting personalities whom I had hoped to see again in London was the explorer and writer, Sir Francis Younghusband. I had met him with my friend Das Gupta on a number of occasions, and he had asked me to read a biblical play which I had much enjoyed. So I sent him a little note, and he received me very charmingly; and, among other things, told me that, sometime before, he and a friend had founded a religious drama school in South Kensington, in which he thought I might be interested. Anne and Fies and I spent two fascinating weeks in and around this drama school, where an interesting faculty gave technical training to a number of young ministers and social workers who wished to learn how to produce dignified and effective religious drama.

Sir Francis' influence on my mind, however, has been through his beautiful writings about the Himalayas. He never fails to stimulate me with visions of their strange white watch over the world.

As we paid our respects to the dance in London Hal Mann and his friend Freeman Southwell made sure that we saw the best things that were going. Hal, devoted to the ballet, was proud that there was so much to see. First we went to Saddler's Wells, where I saw an enchanting ballet based on Hogarth's naughty pictures, and then in contrast a beautiful production of *Job*, done, as Ted's had been, after

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Blake's drawings. It was interesting to mark the contrast in treatment. My impression was that the choreography of the ballet at Saddler's Wells was more evenly excellent than Ted's, but that Ted's had a few more unforgettable moments.

In a night or two we went to the little Mercury Theater and saw one of the performances of the ballet there. Mr. Ashley Dukes received us very charmingly and we enjoyed the *intime* excellence of these productions, which is the result of the fine school presided over by Mrs. Dukes.

Hal and Freeman were business boys by now, but they had Saturdays and Sundays free, and a faithful and efficient little car. So, to my unspeakable delight, they pulled up that first Saturday afternoon at Rose's Hotel Regina and announced that we were off to whatever cathedral I wished to see. I don't remember which the first one was, but by the time the summer was over we had been to Glastonbury, Canterbury, York, and many others.

These week-end excursions were carried out by Hal with a detail and a charm that leaves me waiting for another excuse to fly back again. We would go past country hedges, through old towns beloved of novelists on both sides of the water, and I would start counting the colored animals, as I called the signs on the inns: "The Blue Goose," "The Red Lion," and "The White Heron." At half past eight or nine we would turn with great content toward a delicious supper, a fire, and good clean English beds; and prepare for another day of enchanting repetition. For sheer delight in their holiday spirit these little trips were the loveliest I have ever known.

One afternoon Mr. Richardson, of *The Dancing Times*, that editor who knows all the personalities of the dance, and seems able to fuse their warring elements in himself, gave us a luncheon, at which I met Mr. Douglas Kennedy, of Cecil Sharp House, the home of the Folk Dance Society of Great Britain.

As I had the temple very much on my mind, Mr. Kennedy listened sympathetically, and interrupted me only to exclaim, "I know the man for you to talk it over with. He is an East Indian and by far the most interesting man I know. His name is Mehta, and he has come to England hoping to bring his extraordinary system of physical education to the schools. But you can imagine he's having a difficult time with headmasters. They don't see that a spontaneously coordinated body has more value than one built on the old physical-culture lines. We'll go to see him."

So one memorable afternoon Files and I arrived at Mr. Mehta's

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charming little house in Chelsea, and were taken up into a simply furnished but lovely drawing room. Here a fine grand piano, a few rugs on a shiny wood floor, and simple curtains and furniture gave an air of restful charm. Several others who had come to meet this interesting personality and to watch him demonstrate his work were present.

We saw a tall, slender East Indian, with a strong and supple body, and a remarkable head. He looked like a young eagle with marvelous far-seeing eyes, a curious beaked nose, which on a lesser personality would have thrown the whole composition of his face out of beauty, but which with him not only fitted his keen mind but added great distinction to his aristocratic bearing.

After a little pleasant talk he put back a rug and began to speak, and presently to move. It seemed to me that for the first time since the days of Mrs. Stebbins I had found someone who moved as I believe I move. I can express it in this way because it is so obvious that neither Mr. Mehta nor I created that quality of movement which I am speaking of, any more than he created his brown eyes, or I my blue.

He began by saying that the breath and all the bodily rhythms and movements growing out of the breath if consciously employed would bring us into that intimate awareness of cosmic rhythms better than any other human experience. Here was a prophet after my own heart. As he went through a series of exercises poised, as it were, upon the breath, and making his body an instrument for the unending currents of life to flow through, I kept saying to myself, "Yes, yes, that is what I feel." Before my eyes his movements seemed gradually to relate themselves to the natural forces of movement. As one watched him one felt the rhythms of natural things, of wind and air and sea.

I am afraid that Mr. Mehta and I belong to some other race and times, either too late or too soon. And yet the mere fact that we do exist today proves that somehow life has need of us, or we would not be facing this tragic necessity to reveal in our own bodies the joy and beauty of being in terms of the dance.

By now we had to leave the Regina and all Rose's kindnesses. We found some rooms in Inverness Terrace, and Files and I set to work in good earnest. We worked for at least three hours each day. I took to mending stockings, something I found a little difficult to relate to myself. These aids to concentration, however, were constantly thrown aside ■ the morning advanced and I warmed to my theme. When the subject grew emotional I began to walk, pacing up and down the room. Files for the most part sat immobile and concentrated on the



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business of taking down what I said. Now and then he raised one of his quizzical eyebrows, but he was always patient and comforting when I needed it most.

I do not know why I did not foresee that this preoccupation with an earlier life would arouse all my old questions—emotional, artistic, religious—instead of answering them. The somber note of pain and the eternal fact of my escape to London reared itself higher and higher as I realized that what I was trying to escape was merely a familiar experience in a different garb.

The utter emptiness of my life in work and in love deepened day by day, until it seemed that the very walls of life were shutting me into some terrible prison of suffering. I had come to London with a great hope of finding release, of doing research into temple matters at the museums, and of possibly meeting new personalities who would give me some respite from my gnawing sense of defeat. But I had found no comfort. My soul was in such blackness that nothing which had previously sustained me could cast any light whatever. I had committed all the sins that, in my youth, I had sworn I would not commit. I had developed a capacity for hatred that was utterly foreign to my nature. I think my whole being became one mass of quivering self-abasement the day I found myself, through jealousy and self-justification, doing an actually dishonorable thing. I felt I had reached the limit of sin and wretchedness.

On a number of distinct occasions in my life a book has been given me at a time I desperately needed it, and now a friend sent me a certain volume which brought the answer to this crucial moment. Something from this unexpected source touched a raw spot of my life. And it smarted under this exposure of its nakedness. For the author himself had come to the end of a long journey, and found that his own self-sufficiencies had betrayed him, and that his peace could be found only in complete surrender "of all that he knew of himself to all that he knew of God."

It contained a chapter on *Christ and Sex*, and as my own desperate problem at that moment was emotional I turned directly to it. Beginning rather hopelessly to read, my interest grew, and presently I came to the succinct and arresting sentence, "Ask Christ." I stopped for a moment, and then its significance swept over me. I understood suddenly that the ultimate and fulfilling answer to any emotional question lay in this difficult injunction. I had never been willing to allow this light into the hidden areas of my emotional life. To all other hard problems in my career I had gladly brought such spiritual

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illumination as I had, but in this surrendered moment I realized that I had refused to bring out into the open those deep instinctive elements of my emotional life, fearing, I suppose, that my will and my plans for a supreme satisfaction in love would not stand the ultimate test of my own ideology. But now, in this one act of complete release of my human will, a new realization dawned: in Christ lay the answer to questions of love in all its manifestation.

Here was healing for my inward sore; here was peace that came like a river and inundated all my being. Here was a path that pointed a sure, straight way for my stumbling feet. In this inward act of complete surrender what had heretofore been a theory of my intellect suddenly became a living fact. To all souls who have gone through this experience what actually happens remains forever a mystery; for truly if any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away and all things are become new. Those rare moments, stemming back to my childhood, passing through my early days in Science, suddenly reached their complete fulfillment in this hour. I sat stunned in a curious, childlike wonder. The living presence of Christ filled all space, and yet seemed as intimate as a friend. There in that little room at Inverness Terrace the mustard seed of the kingdom was planted in the soil of my being, and is even now germinating and expanding into new patterns of life, new serenities of the mind.

Why, through all my philosophizing, my intellectual or mystical pursuits had this been held from me? Why were my eyes blinded and my ears stopped that I did not see and hear this unspeakable splendor until this moment? Why does each living soul endure a longer or a shorter cycle of suffering before he is born again? To these I have no answer. They are among the grave mysteries of life. Here lay all joy and dominion, all victory and the beauty of the world. In the depths of my own dark and lonely soul I had seen the divine Image, and heard the Immortal Word.

I knew that I had met the supreme challenge of identification with a quality of life I could no longer escape. Compromises and evasions had come to an end. With all my years of study I was now able to enter this fourth dimension of pure spirit.

I had exchanged the many names and the many forms of religion for one name only. I realized suddenly that there were two types of spiritual seekers: those who by temperament are mystical and ritualistic, and those who are scientific and meditative. I had unconsciously attempted to feed my mystic nature with the food of the intellect and cultivate my spiritual centers by the techniques of metaphysics and

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philosophy, and all the time my soul was hungry for that strange, instantaneous union with Christ which produced peace and fruitfulness. However, in justice to myself and to those books and personalities that had fed my intellectual consciousness all these years I now realized that, instead of the least repudiation of their wisdom, that same wisdom had become clarified and immediate.

I do not hold the author, his book, or the cause he espoused responsible for this illumination. But I do know that the three pre-occupations of my soul—art, religion, and love—lay clear and bare before me.

My art I saw standing seductively between my soul and God, for I constantly substituted the beauty of my own making for the beauty that is already made. I, and all artists, superimposed upon an unbelievably beautiful world of nature the images of our own mortal concepts and our own artificial strivings. Now beauty was the face of God, and not the world of the theater, the gallery, and the concert hall where one sacrificed one's soul.

In a book about Lord Byron, I found these words: ". . . only that the world might learn from his example how worthless and how vicious a thing is genius when divorced from religion, from morals and humanity." I now understood why the artist is a groping, discordant creature, and why his art cannot save him. For the artist puts objective beauty before moral beauty; he substitutes the beauty of the senses for the beauty of the soul. In putting Christ first he at once relates his talents in their divine order and usefulness to the central pole of his being.

I have a talent for drama, dance, and speech. I wanted it to be used for the healing and happiness of the world. For I knew, without a question, that those problems which I had taken with me wherever I went, in whatever relationship I found myself, had met their answer.

Now I knew that whatever acts of surrender in my life were necessary to attain that completed love for which I had so long yearned I would make, and make yet again, until it was accomplished. In my heart was the question, but in God was the answer. For what is any woman in search of but the understanding of love? And what is she offered but tyranny and greed and selfishness and pain? And what are these in the men she has loved but the reflections of her own human passions? She wants them to be perfect—the perfect lover, the perfect husband, father, and friend—while she retains her unsundered vanity, possessiveness, and cruelty.

This much I was finding out now before I was dead. Or perhaps I

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should say that I did die—not once but a hundred times, ending in one final death of all human expectations—when I knew that the world could no longer satisfy the artist nor lovers the lover.

And yet as I write this now, two years later, with Jane, the little dog, asleep on the couch, and the sound of crickets filling the hot August night, I still maintain that one moment of the world-forgetting loveliness of love is supreme in all that this time-world has to give.

I have known the life-expanding sense of power over audiences in the dance, and I praise all gods for this privilege that life has brought me. Yet even this is what Claude Bragdon calls "one of the many marriages." For every good performance partakes of the elements of love. There is the wish to give beauty and the wish to receive. There is the overture of love, its gradual awakening in the first measures of the dance, or in the beginnings of a full performance. Here the artist is ever the lover, and the audience is the beloved. If the psychic values of love are present—sincerity, beauty, and the desire to please and to concentrate upon this act of love—then one's whole performance moves onward to a climax of joy, to a kind of royal nuptial in which the artist feels that he has won the beloved, and that they shall for the brief moment of union create a new experience out of their mutual responses. This often results in a new standard of artistic happiness which each party to this almost cosmic marriage remembers with a haunting beauty.

In this new identification with joy and release, all the ways and means to achieve this happiness in love fall like the crumbling scaffolds of a cathedral, once the building is complete. I did not feel that to remember only the hours of beauty in my life was a deception, an evasion, an escape as some would feel. For we only know the purpose and goal of each cycle of our own life, whether the cycle is the day's preparation in order and beauty for a night of love, or the care and labor for a work of art. When its final brief moment of beauty gives meaning and purpose to the long continuity, all else is the scaffolding around that happiness which, in being happiness, touches the eternal Reality.

Is there or is there not a basic truth concerning sex which the world, including orthodox religion, has signally failed to present to humanity? Is there an operative principle which if understood and practiced would solve any and all of our sexual problems? In a word, is there a science of love?

To approach the science of love we must open the lenses of our minds wide to take in not only the simple biologic forms of the creat-

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ing-love between man and woman which make up the experience of our common days, but to lift our awareness and our understandings to a wider plane and take in the myriad manifestations of the creating-love principle as it manifests itself in the whole world of nature, beginning with the smallest seashell on the beach, which is either masculine or feminine, and continuing to the positive and negative rhythms of the planets as they move in a cosmic order. When we speak of passionate love our minds go around in the narrow orbits of our personal affairs, our own husband or our own wife; the deficiencies and discords of our fathers and mothers; or we engage in some slight forays into the obscurities and misunderstandings of the artistic type as they impinge briefly on the normal life. We, in our narrow orbits, must come out from our own experience and realize that we are dealing not merely with the world of humanity and the world of animals but with trees and rocks and the whole vast pageantry of nature, which in its deep, cosmic breadth obeys rhythmically and perpetually the divine law of creating-love. Therefore nothing should be alien to our hearts, and bringing our understanding back into an intense focus upon our human problems we will have a keener intelligence, we will have something besides vague fear and bewilderment upon which to work.

Our marriage laws have produced infinite radiations of good, but even these, as we know, are not perfect, and change from year to year. Therefore they have not the stability of the divine law, but are at best man's poor efforts to reflect in time and space the immortality and beauty of the unseen perfect Law.

I found myself asking an old question of mine, Did Jesus have any special message for lovers and artists? I saw that he had, of course, a message to cover most of humanity, the rich and the poor, the worker and the saint. But I came to question if Christ had a word, any special word—He who was the Great Lover and the Great Artist—to such as I.

It would seem on the surface that He had a less direct message of peace and hope and beauty for us than the rest of humanity. Yet we also are the poor in heart, we are also worshipers of false gods of our own creating. Mating, desire, love-beauty, creation—these are the concerns of our passionate lives. We speak of the passion of the cross but we mean the suffering, the agony of renunciation, and His oblation for our sins. Did Jesus the man ever know passion or desire? We have seemingly never had the courage to ask. We have been so taught to regard His life as without human desire that it has never occurred to us that His vital and overflowing life would at times express itself in the desire for a tender closeness to another human being. He never married, His social

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or family life ran counter—as does that of every lover and artist—to the motivations and ways of so-called normal living. His entire being was dedicated to the one pointed object of manifesting, teaching, and spreading that state of being which He called the kingdom of heaven, and which supposedly contained the answer to all our questions.

Did it contain also the answer to love? Yes, He gave this answer. For in His gospel of perfect equipoise and balance within, He made no distinction for its application to the endless details of our human existence. In the succeeding centuries our ecclesiasticism has made an arbitrary and utterly unreasoning separation between certain human actions and others equally a part of our vital lives, and this state of mind, these barriers, are what must be broken down, so that Christ's living message shall flow with equal power and beauty into the most secret and intimate phases of human living.

No one realizes more keenly than I the dilemma I have voluntarily placed myself in. I am asking questions pertaining to moral behavior, which can be answered only by a profound understanding of the mystical and intellectual processes that govern this subject. In order first of all to get a symbolic concept of the unseen creating principle, a photograph comes to my mind which I brought from the British Museum. It shows a piece of Hindu sculpture, depicting the love-play between Shiva and his wife Parvati. They are surrounded by musicians and dancers, in all the gay abandon of the Indian feeling for music and form. The flutes and drums, the tinkling crotali on the fingers of the dancing girls, and the garlands they are putting around one another's necks, all breathe out an ecstasy of living which becomes, in the beauty of the symbol, a great and profound truth.

Shiva and Parvati, the divine man and the divine woman, here represent the dual creative principle, the eternal love rhythm which is going on in the unseen causative realms of being from eternity. Here is love, ecstasy, beauty. As against this picture I remember my old theological concept of a Hebrew god, a stern and lonely figure, sharing not his greatness with another, a feeling which has come down to me from our interpreters of the Old Testament; and I am puzzled.

To countless generations of Christians God was created in man's image. It is quite possible that millions of Hindus had visions of Parvati and Shiva actually living their lives of humanized bliss. This is not for one moment what I wish to imply. I only want us to regard this exquisitely beautiful symbol of Shiva and Parvati as an effort to convey a better concept of this unseen truth than our solitary Jehovah-god can give.

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It is true that our Christian theological concepts have attempted to bring in the feminine principle through the image of the Virgin. But has not the emphasis on her purity influenced us to believe that the act of life between a man and a woman is carnal in itself, whereas it seems obvious to me that it is the attitude of mind governing that act which degrades it or lifts it up. The word "purity" has been used in a mistaken and negative sense, instead of in its true meaning of "unadulterated."

Let us remember that the period of gestation, the act of birth, the fondling and loving of a baby by the mother are no less and no more physical than the act of intercourse between a man and a woman. In a word, this virginal conception of the feminine principle has laid a ban upon the act of intercourse, a disapproval, and a pronouncement of evil, which in my mind has done incalculable harm to the children so conceived and brought into the world.

Of course there are varying concepts of the unseen creative principle; and for a scientific approach to an understanding of passionate love, these misconceptions must give way before a true and clear idea of the dualism of the causative realm. I am well aware that, in the last analysis, the human brain, with its limited structure, can find no word for and no intellectual concepts of the ultimate reality; but in man's efforts to grasp some tangible principles of life and religion we are forced to symbolize those realities which lie all about us.

There are two types of lovers, as there are of artists: those who seek the solutions of their problems of frustration and sin through renunciation, and those who avail themselves of the adjustments made possible by a rationalizing mind. In the long last, any philosophy or science of love must include these two and bring them into a harmonizing unity.

Having found the spiritual solution to my own love life in this vital experience of surrender, I feel now that I have a true and living message for all lovers everywhere. In that act of surrendering my own plans, my own efforts to bring into my life those experiences which I so desperately needed but which my human concept did nothing but destroy, I found at last that inner assurance that will ultimately bring me the answer ■ my basic need. Oh, you lovers everywhere who are parted and troubled, or near and discordant, go quickly to Him who waits on the hilltops of your souls, for there you will find peace, and your hidden love. Let Christ always be the third person at the feast, the white passion at the bridal, the constant companion on the road. He is the ultimate answer and even now is nearer than breath or as far away as your stubborn will!

It was clear to me that this whole experience was what I had, unknown

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to myself, come to London for, and that, having attained this purpose, I must immediately return home.

As I see it now the period from my arrival in New York to the momentous evening two years later when I gave a single temple meeting under the fostering care of Donald Sutphin at The MacDowell Club was one in which I was both consciously and unconsciously waiting for this new light to manifest itself in a design large enough and fine enough to engage the full forces of my being.

This waiting period was spent in moving from one apartment to another; in fending off my financial difficulties, with the help of my good friend and lawyer, George Howard; in writing a good deal along educational and artistic lines in relation to the dance; in holding a few informal meetings, partly social and partly with a temple spirit. Once I had a real nostalgia for the old farm, and those little hills from which I had come drew me again. So I made a pilgrimage to Pin Oaks. Generally I dash right up to the Little Place, as we called the acreage that was still left to me, but this time I wanted to see if there were any people in the village who remembered Father and Mother. I found several dear, genial people who chatted reminiscently. The most interested person, and one who did me real service, was Mr. Conover of the *Somerset Gazette*, who found the personals that I used to despise but which came in so conveniently to this tale. Then Mr. Carter showed me the old deed of Pin Oaks which I had never seen and I spent a charming half hour in the old Court House with him. Charles Mulholland and William Major knew Father well, and stories about him began to flow. Then I called on Dr. Mary Gaston, my mother's contemporary, a woman doctor of gracious charm and bearing the prestige of being one of the few women doctors of her period. All this brought back the old days in a strange mood of a living past, as well as in the simple renewal of my childhood. I knew that sometime I would build a little cottage on Pin Oaks and return to those hills again.

One of my small interests in the city was a drama group presided over by my friend Bill Thornton, to whom came a very talented and unique personality, a young actor named David More, who, the following season, supported me so superbly as *Herod* when I played Oscar Wilde's *Salome*. These evenings kept alive my expressiveness, and bridged over many wondering hours; but in the main I was sustained by a conviction that never left me. To the degree that I held myself in a selfless attitude for God to use, a new design would be evolved.

A puzzling problem during this period was the extent to which I should communicate this great experience to others, and how much I



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should put it through the various forms of my art. In London I had been told that I must go down and see Sam Shoemaker, the head of the Oxford Group in New York. I went down to Calvary Church and met him and his delightful family. There I made my personal witness from the pulpit. Sam Shoemaker convinced me that to put these commands of Christ into our daily living was the only practical answer to the world's deep spiritual darkness.

Sam, like a first-century Christian, is using the modern medium of expression on all fronts. He has the eagerness of youth and the wise tolerance and breadth of maturity, and he is a born leader. In his leadership of the Oxford Group at Calvary is an unpredictable force for righteousness in America.

My very precious relationship with him and Jack Smith and the others at Calvary enabled me to touch the hem of that robe of fellowship which the Group is weaving all over the world. But my part was and is as yet undefined. I am sure I shall be guided from time to time to become a simple and single unit of that dynamic movement, in my opinion the most living organism within the traditional Christian Church. At the same time my personal growth and the continuing unfoldment of that spirit which we instinctively feel characterizes the early Christian centuries necessitates a certain waiting attitude and a disinclination, which has been reflected in my entire life, to become completely identified with any one group. But I learned from this experience that to put the commands of Christ into our daily living was the only practical reply to the world's deep spiritual darkness.

Yet my own problem was unsolved. What illumination could I bring to that darkness?

One of the first promises of an answer came on the evening at The MacDowell Club.

As so often happens, this temple evening was done by me in a more or less hesitant manner. I did not subscribe very willingly to Brother Don's suggestion, but I said very simply that if it were right it would be successful. I danced with the rhythmic choir; Andrew made a little presentation speech; and I gave several dances, including the beloved old *Incense*. When it was over I went into the reception room to meet many old friends who, I had heard, were in the audience. Out of the group stepped Isabel Eddy, and directly behind her was Paul Eddy. They gave me an enthusiastic word of greeting, and praise for the evening.

A faint inner excitement took hold of me at seeing them again. They brought back the Forty-fourth Street evenings, and we were soon

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chatting happily about many things. Presently Mr. Eddy said, "May we come soon and see you? Since the old temple evenings I have been made President of Adelphi College, on Long Island, and I have many things to discuss with you. I think the time has arrived; you are going to be released again into action."

So to my little apartment a few days later they came, and it was indeed a momentous evening. I sat listening to them, and could hardly believe my ears. Before they left, such an ambitious project unfolded itself that I suddenly knew why my other projects had not come to fruition. I listened with a prophetic awareness to Mr. Eddy's words of his vision for this college.

He asked me to create a dance department, where the technical and artistic phases of the modern and the Oriental would be balanced by certain manifestations of the temple, which he felt made a definite contribution to the integration of religion and the arts.

So the next day I called a meeting of Jack Cole and Anna and Don and Ada Korvin, and they assumed the responsibility for these departments. I felt that I had at last met an educator whose vision for all the planes of human activity, for all the hopes and dreams, labors and recreations of youth was of such a scope that I could willingly bring the patterns of my life and ideas as part of his design. And I had found in him that partner without whom I could never be released again into active expression.

He sees education in its entirety, serving the individual student in a practical and progressive way, so that be she wife or artist or landscape gardener she will learn within the college walls to utilize these elements of education till she has made of them a living whole. And in this project he sees the dance as a vital and energizing force.

I feel that in entering on this adventure I have found an environment which can accept and use the maximum talent and the maximum understanding that my life until now has achieved. What forms the future will take I do not know, but it will be both formed and released by the cooperation and stimulus of this fine, broad mind, this dedicated soul with whom I now have the privilege of working. And I am hoping not only to express in this environment those aesthetic dance forms which are the residue of my career and those unfolding forms for the dance in America which will be created as the dance integrates itself to education, but also to be able to give body and form to that flame of conviction that possesses me, that conviction that the way of Christ is the supreme evaluation of life not only for the art of the dance but for men and women everywhere. This thought was so succinctly

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and beautifully expressed by William DeWitt Hyde many years ago that I cannot hope to better it: "Before Paul had cast it into a theology or 'John' had developed it into a philosophy; before the Catholics had organized it into an institution or the Protestants had stereotyped it into a creed, primitive Christianity was known in simplicity as 'The Way.' "•

I am acting under an impulsion, a guidance, and a realization of life which is unpredictable in its purposes and radiations. I stand ready to go anywhere, and do anything that I am guided to do. If my art life can truly be made an instrument for this message, then I will use it; ■ it cannot, it will be abandoned. This new quality of living, this kingdom of God can be lived now as it was in the first century—in simplicity, and joy, and peace beyond the like of anything that this world of outer form can give us.

I am now able at last to stand up in the presence of those three gods in whose worship I was prostrated for so long. For life is bigger than any of its manifestations. At last I have come to the art of realization: that art within the soul itself which realizes the elements, powers, and ultimate beauty of life without the limitation and bondage of human conceptions and their manifestation.

What went before—a child hearing her first words of spiritual comfort at her mother's side, a girl reading a great book which opened new areas to her soul, a student searching into the mysteries of the Orient, an artist giving her nightly ritual of beauty, and always a pilgrim on her way to peace—finally beheld, through the literatures and the temples of the world, a Figure seated in the sunshine on a hill of Palestine.

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